GLENN TIPTON UNLEASHED: TRIUMPH & TRAGEDY IN JUDAS PRIEST!

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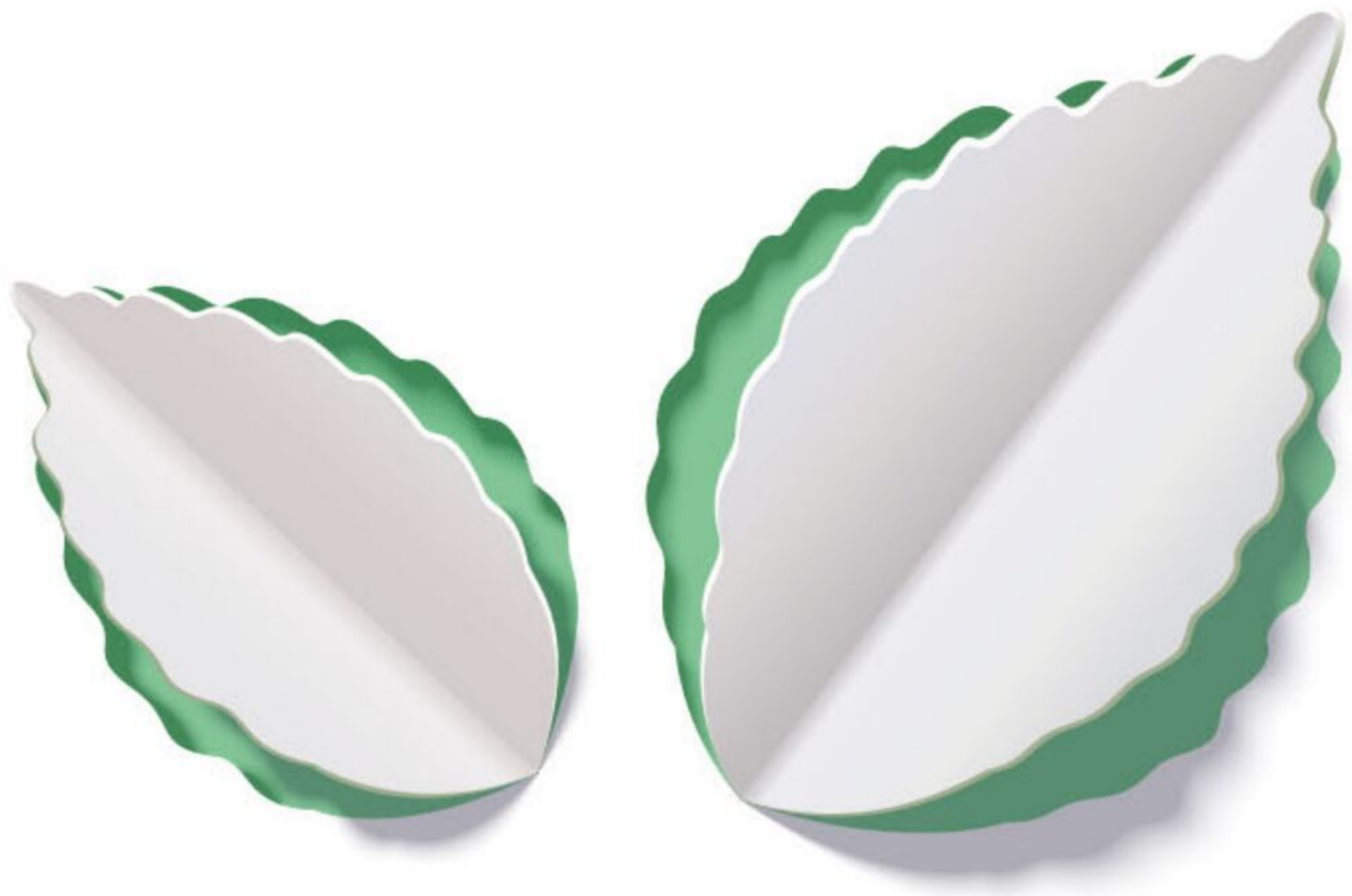

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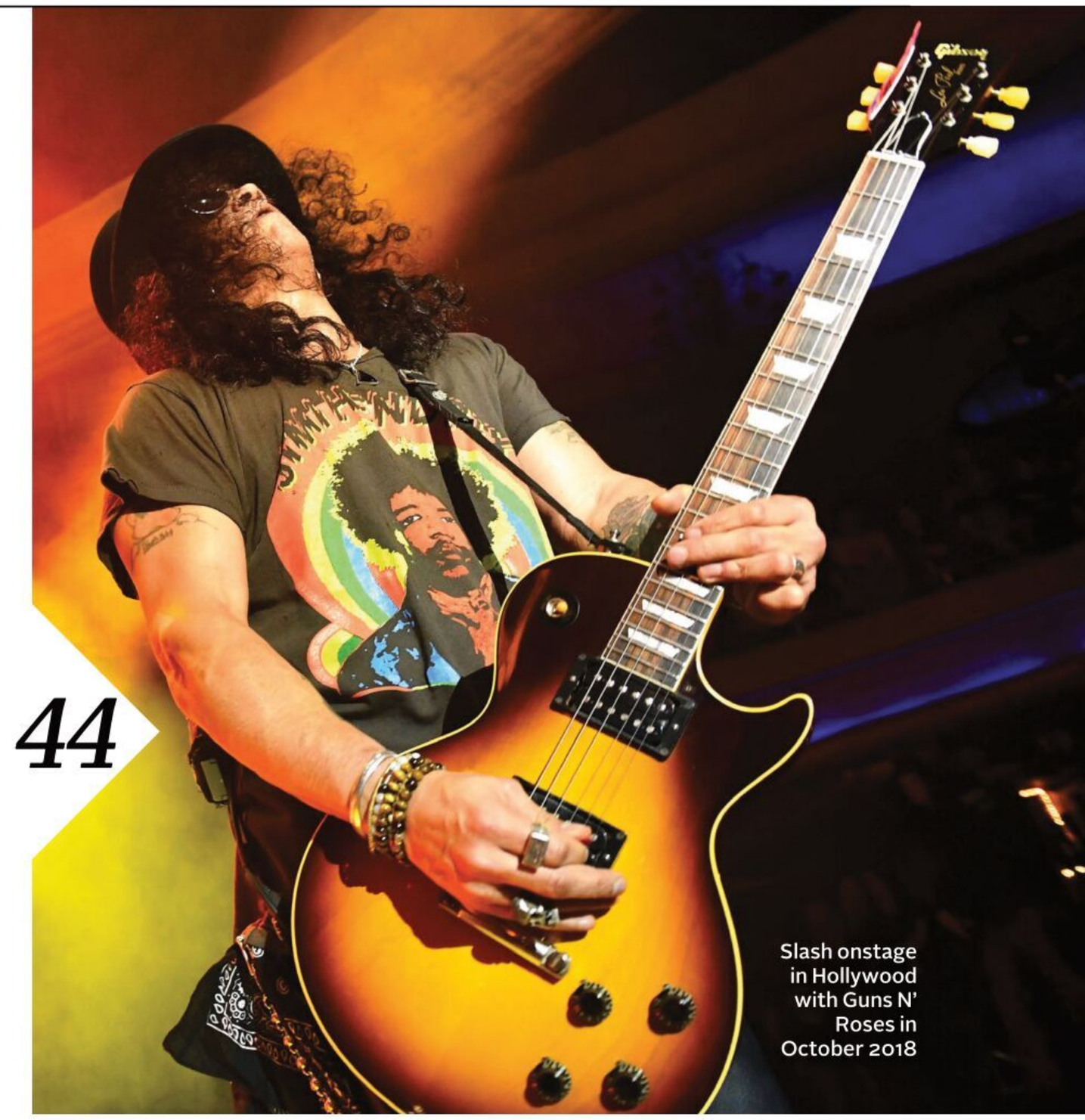

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RUNNING WILD

WHILE READING THIS issue's stories (which I do, over and over and over and over again), I couldn't help but notice a bit of sad Judas Priest-centric irony. On page 20, HammerFall's Oscar Dronjak mentions the vintage dream-team combination of Judas Priest's Glenn Tipton and K.K. Downing: "The styles of Tipton and Downing complement each other perfectly," he says. "They've taught me so much about playing guitar and writing music." Then, over on page 40, reporter Jon Wiederhorn points out that a new-ish At the Gates song — "Spectre of Extinction" — appeals to Martin Larsson and Jonas Stålhammar's shared affinity for classic Judas Priest — "a true Tipton and Downing moment, at least until the song darts off into a detuned, nitro-fueled death-thrash hybrid."

So, if you were a complete newcomer to this planet, you'd read all this and think, "Wow, these Tipton and Downing guys must be big-time pals!" But then you'd eventually stumble across our Holiday 2021 interview with Downing and, of course, this issue's interview with Tipton (both of which were written by the prolific Jon Wiederhorn), where, sadly, we find out that things aren't so rosy.

Hey, I'm not choosing sides; I'm just a regular schmoe watching from a (sort of) safe distance. But I will say that it's always a bit upsetting when the guitarists we grew up admiring — especially a duo (from the same legendary band) that created so many memorable guitar parts together — "can't just get along" as they did in ancient times.

In closing, I'd like to echo Tipton's sentiment on page 37: "I'd like to see both bands [*Judas Priest and KK's Priest*] go on and enjoy heavy metal, as you should do. It would be nice to see our careers out together, even if we're in different bands."

DAMIAN FANELLI
Editor-in-Chief

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Does *Guitar World* cover too many old-timers?

I'd like to comment on Tom Clement's letter in the January 2022 Sounding Board ("Old wave?"). I agree with his statement and reasoning for the focus on the "old-timers." I enjoy history and reading about these great artists; however, I, too, would like to read about the new, up-and-coming guitarists that'll keep rock and metal alive for the future. Here in central Kentucky, I know of one band that's doing exactly that: Taylor Road, four men ranging in ages from 18 to 23. Their collective knowledge of rock and metal is extensive and adds to their ability to do a great job of paying homage to the greats in the covers they perform as well as strengthening their own music signature in their originals.

Until *Guitar World*'s writers and staff can figure out a way to feature the great unknown artists out there, Mr. Clement may want to visit Taylor Road's Facebook and Instagram (@taylorroadofficial). I don't think he'll be disappointed, and he'll enjoy seeing future legends in the making who will one day be featured in *Guitar World*.

— *Brenda Lynch*

I'm 56. If *Guitar World* didn't have articles about my favorite "old-timers" such as the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, the Who, Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, Cream, Jimi Hendrix, Rush, Yes, Van Halen, Eric Clapton and Jeff Beck (I won't list them all), I wouldn't be a nearly 30-year subscriber! These bands are the foundation of who I am as a musician and singer. Perhaps, if the younger generation created memorable, creative, timeless songs, *Guitar World* would have no need to write about the "old-timers." How many songs written in the last 20 years will still be on the radio 40 or 50 years from now? The answer is simple: None! There are a lot of young, talented guitarists out there, but it's pointless to play that well when you can't write a great song to save your life. I'll take the music of "old-timers" any day over the music created in the 2000s.

— *Dennis*

Finally some Uli Jon Roth!

Thank you for transcribing "The Sails of Charon" by the Scorpions [January 2022]. Finally a song from the Uli Jon Roth era of the band. Roth is an amazing guitar player; it's about time he got some love from your magazine. I find this era of the band vastly ignored, which is sad. If you've never listened to early Scorpions, may I suggest *Tokyo Tapes*, a truly awesome live album. Maybe next time you could try "Polar Nights" or "Fly to the Rainbow." Mind-blowing stuff.

— *Charlie Magee*

Finally some Brian Baker!

I am a lifelong reader of *GW*, and I can't tell you how stoked I was to see the article with Brian Baker in the January 2022 issue. Brian is a punk rock legend and criminally underrated guitar player. He also seems to be incredibly humble considering the amazing body of work he's put together throughout his career. It's nice to see him get some ink in a major publication. Reading the article also made me realize that I don't remember *GW* ever transcribing a Bad Religion song. Maybe it's time?

— *Mike Schaeffer*

He probably didn't watch *Get Back* on Disney+

Yeesh. How did I end up subscribing to a magazine that has an editor-in-chief who likes the Beatles? Barf!

— *Enam Tsal*

DEFENDERS *of the Faith*

Henry Peters

AGE: 62
LOCATION: Vancouver, BC, Canada
GUITARS: Two Halo 10-string fanned-fret babies
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: I'm an elementary school principal, so I play "I Am a Pizza," "The Wheels on the Bus" and "There Goes John Jacob Jinkleheimer Schmidt" for my kindergarten students
GEAR I WANT MOST: 4 EMG Crossroads Strat Pickups (or the Surf 7-string models) and an Etherial Zatha 10

Paul Woods

AGE: 47
LOCATION: Pepperell, MA
GUITARS: Gibson Les Paul Classic and SG Special, Schecter Hellraiser and Apocalypse V1, Hamer Vector, Steinberger Spirit, Ibanez MiKro bass and acoustic
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Judas Priest "Starbreaker" and "Saints in Hell," my own songs — "Digital Slayer" and "Dash to Our Demise"
GEAR I WANT MOST: Fender Stratocaster HSS, Marshall JCM800

Rob Hayes

AGE: 37
LOCATION: Royal Oak, MI
GUITARS: 1955 National Town and Country, Fender J Mascis purple sparkle Jazzmaster, 1994 Gibson Nighthawk, a slew of partscasters, late Sixties/early Seventies Martin 12-string and a Seventies D.I.A. MIJ lawsuit-era Gallagher Doc Watson copy acoustic
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Goodbye Mansfield "Summer Girl" and "Any/More" and anything by Thin Lizzy, especially "Freedom Song"
GEAR I WANT MOST: A Seventies Veleno

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OF THE MONTH

If you've created a drawing, painting or sketch of your favorite guitarist and would like to see it in an upcoming issue of *Guitar World*, email **GWSoundingBoard@futurenet.com** with a scan of the image!

DAVE MUSTAINE BY ISABELLE BAILEY

RUYTER SUYS OF NASHVILLE PUSSY BY CHRISTINE McDONALD

Jon Roper

AGE: 47
LOCATION: Vancouver, BC, Canada
GUITARS: Gibson 2001 Custom Shop Firebird, Nioma lap steel, Eastman T145 hollowbody
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Yes "Awaken," Albert King "Crosscut Saw," Wes Montgomery "Cariba"
GEAR I WANT MOST: Empress Nebulus, Supro 1970RK Keeley Custom, Les Paul Goldtop

Sierra Levesque

AGE: 15
LOCATION: Pembroke, ON, Canada
GUITARS: Schecter Robert Smith RS-1000 acoustic, Epiphone Matt Heafy "Snowfall" Les Paul Custom, Epiphone G-1275 Double Neck, Schecter 1298 V-1 Apocalypse, Schecter DJ Ashba Acoustic, ESP E-11 Eclipse BB and many more
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Metallica "Master of Puppets," the Runaways "Cherry Bomb," Ghost "Cirice" and originals
GEAR I MOST WANT: ESP Original Series Custom Arrow (Liquid Pink), Marshall JCM 800 Lead Series 4x12 cab, Marshall JCM800 2203 100W head

Bill Sanders

AGE: 58
LOCATION: Pitman, NJ
GUITARS: Gibson Les Paul, Nighthawk, Firebird, Explorer, Songwriter Deluxe, Jackson Custom Shop Soloist, Dinky, Mesa/Boogie Triple Crown
SONGS I'VE BEEN PLAYING: Originals for the Sweet Mercy Band's second album, plus Revolution Saints "It's Not the End," Allman Brothers Band "Statesboro Blues"
GEAR I MOST WANT: Fractal Audio FM3

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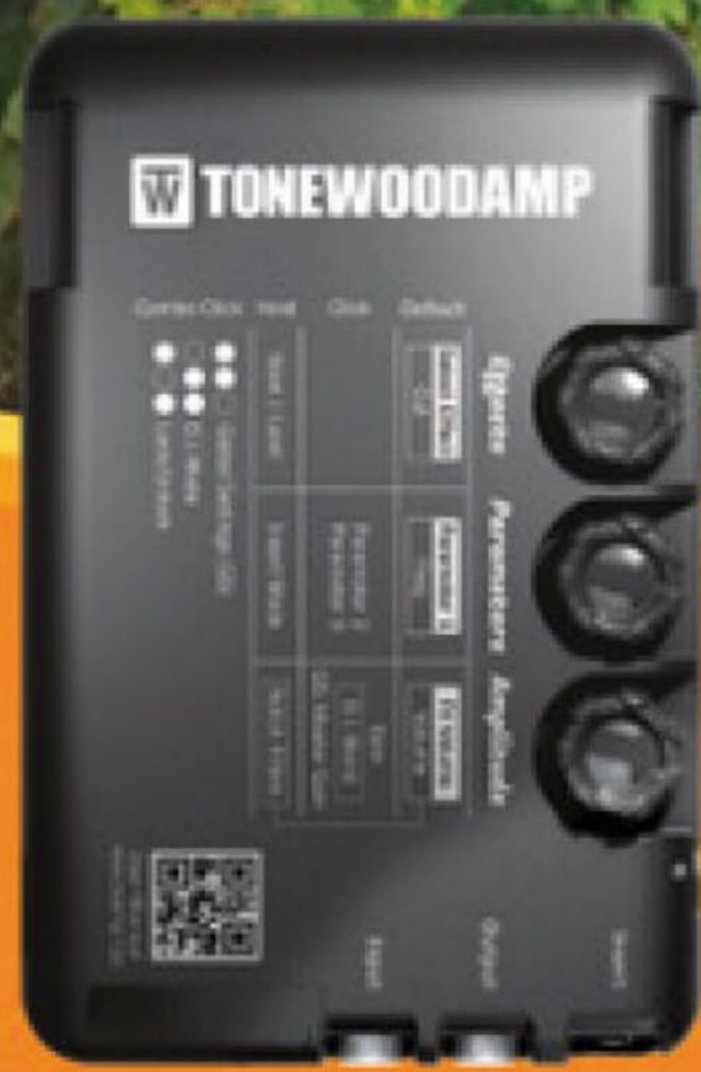

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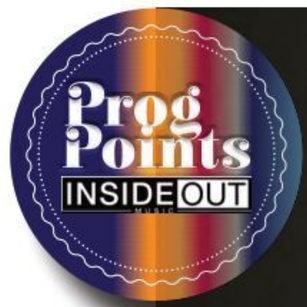


All This and *War of the Worlds, Pt. II*

FOR HIS LATEST SOLO ALBUM, SYMPHONY X SHREDDER MICHAEL ROMEO RETURNS TO THE H.G. WELLS OF INSPIRATION

By Joe Bosso

MIXING MYTHOLOGICAL AND fantasy literature with progressive metal is nothing new to Michael Romeo. Since 1994, the guitar star has guided his New Jersey-based band Symphony X through a series of albums based on the classic works of Homer (*The Odyssey*), Milton (*Paradise Lost*) and Dante (*The Divine Comedy*).

"I always wanted to say something a little more interesting than 'Let's get up and party!'" Romeo says. "Some of the themes in classic works are just as relevant today as when they first appeared. Plus, when you're dealing with heavy concepts, it gives you a roadmap for writing music. You don't have to just do verse, chorus, verse, chorus. You can do whatever you want and write stuff that's really big."

Back in 2018, Romeo took time away from Symphony X and released a wildly extravagant solo album based on H.G. Wells' sci-fi masterwork, *The War of the Worlds*, only the guitarist rather cheekily stuck a *Pt. I* at the end of the title. "That was

Michael Romeo with his signature Caparison Dellinger Prominence-MJR model

DANNY SANCHEZ

kind of subtle, huh?" he laughs. "I always planned a two-parter. For the first one, I wrote so much music, and I didn't want it to go to waste. So now it's a few years later, and we have the companion piece."

War of the Worlds, Pt. II features performances by bassist John "JD" DeServio and drummer John Macaluso, but it marks the first time the guitarist worked with Croatian singer Dino Jelusick (best known as a touring member of Trans-Siberian Orchestra). "I go way back with JD and John, and they're awesome," Romeo says. "Dino came recommended to me, and he did a great job. Everybody got what I was going for right away."

As he did on the first set, Romeo blends his prodigious shred guitar skills with elements of EDM alongside orchestral flourishes reminiscent of film score giants such as Bernard Hermann and John Williams. "On paper, it might look crazy," the guitarist says, "but all of my influences are on this record. I grew up on guys like Yngwie Malmsteen and Randy Rhoads, but I also spent so much time as a kid watching sci-fi movies. Of course there was *Star Wars*, but I go back to those great Ray Harryhausen movies like *Jason and the Argonauts* and *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad*. I connected with the music in those movies as much as I did with metal bands."

Anybody curious how all this sounds will have their questions answered on the new album's opening cut, "Introduction" — Romeo weaves doomsday riffage and searing prog-metal soloing with dramatic blasts of symphonic orchestration that will have listeners looking toward the skies for attacking aliens. But it's not all a visit to your local AMC; on blistering tracks such as "Divide and Conquer" and "Maschinenmensch," he goes full damage-mode metal, dishing out passages of blinding sweep picking likely to evoke feelings of shock, awe and disbelief.

"Some of my solos are more straight-up, but there's a few places where I really went for it," Romeo says. "There's always some Randy Rhoads in what I do, but I throw in a little Van Halen, too. When it comes to sweep picking arpeggios, I have to give it up for Frank Gambale and Allan Holdsworth. Frank has always been the king, and Allan was so smooth when he played those wide intervals."

All of Romeo's guitar tracks were performed on Caparison models — he's been aligned with the Japan-based company since 2005 and has collaborated with them on several signature guitars. For *WOTW2*, he sought a little more grit on his rhythm takes, and the folks at Caparison sent him a seven-string model to try out. "It took me a minute to get used to that extra string," he admits. "For a while, I was like, 'Where the fuck am I on this?' But now I really like it. I might see if I can design a couple of them."

"I go back to those great movies like *Jason and the Argonauts* and *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad*. I connected with the music in those movies as much as I did with metal bands"

Since the Covid pandemic hit in the early spring of 2020, Symphony X has been off the road. Their planned tour for that year was rescheduled for 2021, then promptly nixed. With an air of cautious optimism, Romeo reports that the band will resume gigging in the spring of 2022. "Fingers crossed, we'll be wheels up and playing the States, then Europe," he says. "We're all antsy to play, but we're not going to get totally excited till we're at the first show with real people in front of us."

It's been six years since Symphony X issued a proper studio record (their last was 2015's *Underworld*), and Romeo hints that the group might finally get together to work on some new music. "It would be great to put something out before we tour again," he says. "Once again, the scheduling of everything just killed us. I did the solo record, and then the band would get ready to tour, only to have things fall through. To be honest, it takes the wind out of your sails. But we're talking a lot, and we all know we need to do it. So I'm hopeful. In times like this, you have to stay positive."

WHAT'S ON MY PLAYLIST

OSCAR DRONJAK
OF HAMMERFALL

1

"Balls to the Wall," *Accept*
I don't know if the perfect song exists, but this is as close as you can get. The intro riff is to the Eighties metal generation what "Smoke on the Water" was to the Seventies. Classic doesn't begin to describe it!

2

"Dorian Grey," *Stormwitch*
The guitar work of Lee Tarot and Steve Merchant has had a massive influence on me. Their way of playing encompasses everything I look for in a metal guitarist/band: great, guitar-driven songs performed with variation and skill in rhythm and lead.

3

"Exciter," *Judas Priest*
The styles of Glenn Tipton and K.K. Downing complement each other perfectly. They've taught me so much about playing guitar and writing music. When I started out, I spent hours trying to learn the songs; when I got older and better, I realized I had missed so many of the details that really make their songs into the classics they are.

4

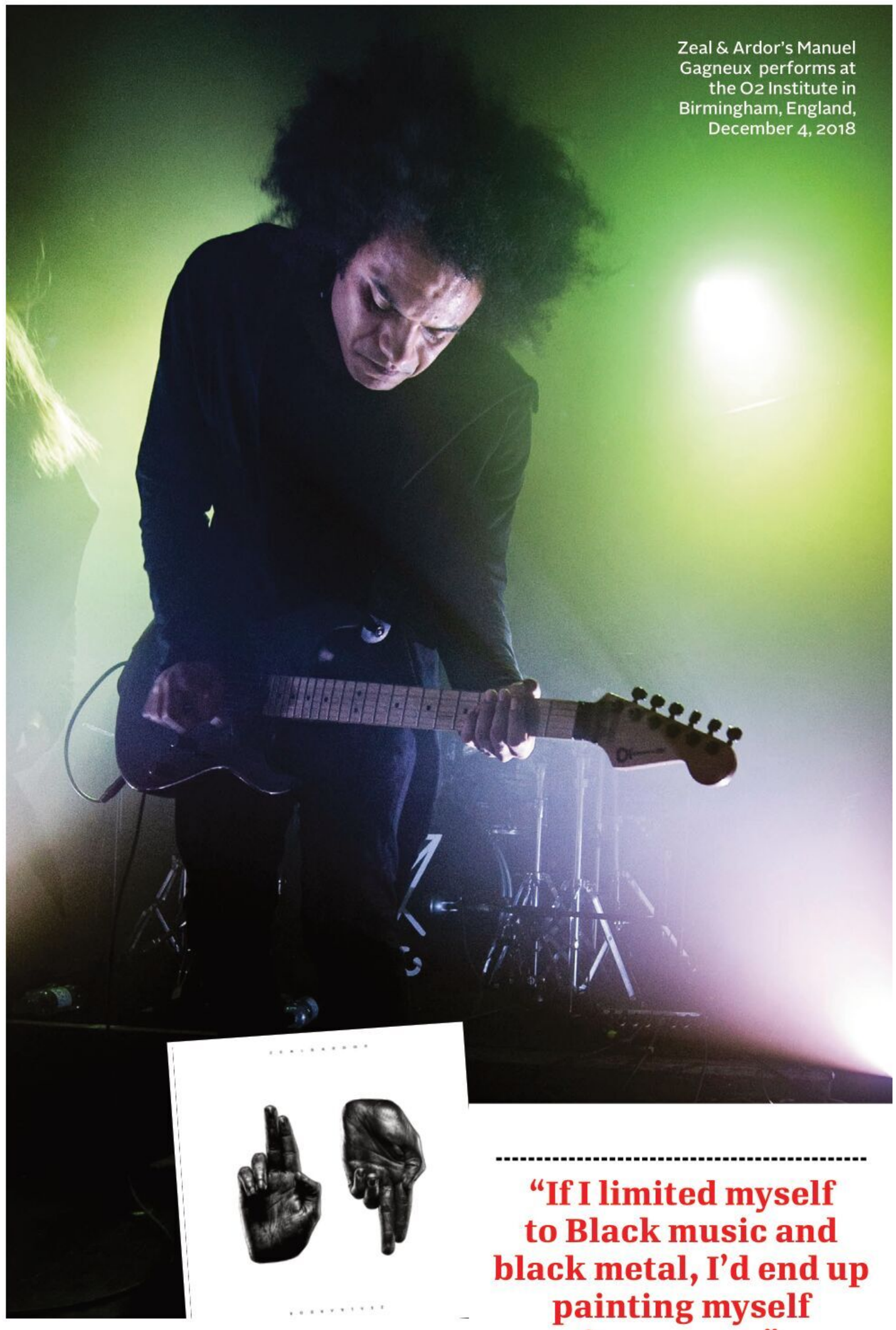
"Necrophiliac," *Slayer*
A big emphasis has been placed on riffs and building the track, often breaking off with something completely different in the middle or toward the end of a song, and [*Kerry King and Jeff Hanneman*] weren't afraid to just let the riffs do the talking. This was a songwriting master class for me and very much shaped the way I approach writing music.

5

"Calling Dr. Love," *Kiss*
The way Paul Stanley and Ace Frehley structured their rhythm parts. They often played very different things, but it worked so well together! And then, of course, Ace's incredibly personal way of playing leads helped elevate the music even more. Add Gene Simmons' bass lines and Peter Criss' drumming, and it creates something unique and, well, Kiss-eriffic.

HAMMERFALL'S NEW ALBUM, *HAMMER OF DAWN*, IS OUT FEBRUARY 22 VIA NAPALM RECORDS

ROMEO: DANNY SANCHEZ PLAYLIST: ROBERT TUCHI/PICWISH FOTODESIGN



Zeal & Ardor's Manuel Gagneux performs at the O2 Institute in Birmingham, England, December 4, 2018

Zeal & Ardor

IS THIS YOUR NEW FAVORITE AVANT-METAL BAND?

By Jon Wiederhorn

SWISS-AMERICAN MULTI-INSTRUMENTALIST Manuel Gagneux formed Zeal & Ardor in 2014 on a dare to combine black metal with Black music. The resulting hybrid of buzzsaw riffs, trip-hop groove, haunting lyrics and gravedigger chants turned heads, and the feedback convinced him to continue the project, which he called Zeal & Ardor.

"I've never believed in boundaries," Gagneux says days before beginning a tour with Opeth and Mastodon. "I love combining all these different styles I'm into and just take them in whatever direction feels inspiring. Then I throw it all up against the wall to see what sticks. I've done that since the beginning."

Gangeux's full-length 2016 debut, the pained, provocative *Devil Is Fine,* was praised in underground metal and indie circles. So Zeal & Ardor took their angry gospel to the road with equal success. Then, in 2018 Gagneux wrote and released the more eclectic and experimental *Stranger Fruit*, which kept one foot firmly planted in the occult and the other in African-American music and history. For Zeal & Ardor's new, self-titled release, however, Gagneux has pulled back from some of the musical and lyrical motifs and focused less on black metal lyrics and tremolo riffs in favor of a more diverse range of styles, including thrash, industrial, post-rock and soundtrack music, without abandoning his roots.

"I didn't want to stray too far from what I've done before, so you've still got the Delta blues and heavy riffs in there," he says. "But I feel like if I limited myself to Black music and black metal, I'd end up painting myself in a corner and then it wouldn't be fun anymore."

On *Stranger Fruit*, drummer Marco Von Allmen replaced the group's drum machine and has played on everything Zeal & Ardor have done since then. And when he's on the road, Gagneux takes with him a lineup of talented, creative touring musicians who sometimes take unexpected liberties with his songs.

"I love it because it keeps me on my toes and I get to hear the music go to places that, maybe, I didn't expect," he says. At the same time, he reiterates that he never wants Zeal & Ardor to be a full band. "I'm a real control freak," he says. "I feel like it's my baby and I don't want to give it up. So I do everything on the albums except the drums, which my body is simply too stupid to do."

> **"If I limited myself to Black music and black metal, I'd end up painting myself in a corner"**
>
> — *MANUEL GAGNEUX*

AXOLOGY

- **GUITARS** Fender, Charvel, Aristides
- **AMPS** Fractal Audio Axe Fx (multiple settings)
- **EFFECTS** Ableton AG (various), Fractal Audio Axe Fx
- **STRINGS** D'Addario

KATJA OGRIN/REDFERNS

Lost Symphony mastermind Benny Goodman got Marty Friedman and Nuno Bettencourt [*left and right, facing page*] to play on a new track, "Take Another Piece." The song also features solos by Alex Skolnick and Cradle of Filth's Richard Shaw

Symphonies of Destruction

LOST SYMPHONY FOUNDER BENNY GOODMAN TELLS US HOW HE ROPED IN GUITAR LEGENDS *EN MASSE* FOR HIS LATEST INSTRUMENTAL ESCAPADES

By Amit Sharma

"I HAVE ABOUT 185 guitars here with me at home... I'm a *total* tone nerd," begins Lost Symphony guitarist/keyboardist Benny Goodman, who started the project back in 2015. Taking *GW* on a quick tour of what feels more like a museum than someone's home studio, with all kinds of rare Gibsons, Paul Reed Smiths and Fenders lined up across endless walls, he's clearly invested a lot of time, effort and money into what he calls — and we have no doubt — his biggest passion.

This is also evident from the music he's been making with Lost Symphony. On their three studio albums to date, the group have enlisted famous friends to guest on nearly every track, harnessing the mind-boggling talents of Bumblefoot and Satchel or Angel Vivaldi and Jeff Loomis for some suitably epic musical expeditions. That said, "Take Another Piece" — the lead single from 2021's *Chapter III* — could very well be the most head-turning collaboration of them all, with Nuno Bettencourt, Marty Friedman, Alex Skolnick and Cradle of Filth's Richard Shaw signing up for a quadruple guitar assault to propel their classical overtures. Mixing elements of film score, progressive metal and "fuckin' Disney," Goodman — who is joined by his brother Brian, guitarists Kelly Kereliuk and Cory Paza, drummer Paul Lourenco and violinist Siobhán Cronin — is on a mission to melt expectations and trail far beyond rock's usual confines.

"With instrumental stuff, you're writing more than music to wank over," he says. "You have to *compose*. Go back to classical music, listen to it and then steal from it. That's what Yngwie did, so that's what I do. Franz Liszt is how I learned how to use all that diminished stuff. He would change the feel from happy to sad to angry with every chord, maybe every beat! Listening to that gets you out of the pentatonic and 4/4 boxes.

> **"Marty [Friedman] is passive aggressive; he'll say, 'You don't have to do what I tell you, but it might not be awesome!' Nuno is from Boston, so he tells you how it is"**
>
> *— BENNY GOODMAN*

"Go watch *Fantasia* and really pay attention to the music. It was Walt Disney's way of giving us an acid trip. That stuff will help you start thinking differently. Even listening to Dream Theater will help you hear things *beyond* metal. If you want to play like that, maybe listen to what John Petrucci or Malmsteen were listening to, from Paganini and Schubert to Chopin and Vivaldi. Those guys were pretty metal too!"

How did you come up with the idea for a band like Lost Symphony?

I'm a DJ that plays stuff like Earth, Wind & Fire as well as EDM. Sometimes I play classical piano for a bunch of elitists and I also record beats for rap people. I decided to make some music just for me. I always loved the song "November Rain." I'd always fast-forward to the solo Slash plays when he's on the piano in the video. The same goes for Rush; I always liked "La Villa Strangiato," when Geddy Lee decided he's just a bass player. I love Dream Theater, but it gets a little much for me after a while. So I was thinking, how could I mix all of these things? Oh, and I'm a Jew, so Trans-Siberian Orchestra is awesome, but I don't get the Jesus part — leave him out of it. I don't want any politics or religion in my music. I just want the devil, fire and brimstone. There was a need in my soul to write these songs, which came from loving Hans Zimmer and John Williams as much as Malmsteen, Ozzy and Queen.

You clearly enjoy playing guitar, but you

BENNY: JAMES FOSTER MARTY: BRIGITTE ENGL/REDFERNS NUNO: TOMMASO BODDI/GETTY IMAGES

seem to prefer hiring other guitarists.
Starting this project, I realized I'm not a good enough guitarist. I needed to find people better than me to complete my vision, almost like the Frank Zappa role in this. I'm not comparing myself to Frank Zappa, I just mean being a maniacal overlord! So I started asking online, who is the best guitarist out there that I've never heard of? Loads of people kept saying Kelly Kereliuk, who became the guitarist in this band. I knew I had found the Jedi, so I asked if there were any other Jedis like him. He came up with this guy called Conrad Simon who sent me this overture. It was the most mind-melting shit I'd ever heard. That's how "Leave Well Enough Alone" started — written by Conrad, Kelly, me and my brother. It was all done on Facebook Chat in 2015. We were the Covid band before Covid!

Oli Herbert from All That Remains was also involved early on. The final track on the album, "My Last Goodbye," features one of his final recordings.
When he passed [*in 2018*], we were just releasing our first record, and his death came as a total surprise. A friend got some of our tracks over to him and he really liked what he heard. He'd stay at my house for weeks straight, recording all night, putting Alex Skolnick-style solos on crazy pop songs. I was lucky to be around one of the greatest people at the right time. I could Frankenstein 50 more solos from the guy — we recorded so much — and I get goosebumps thinking about what Oli played on "My Last Goodbye." But I feel sad that I'll never hear him laugh or tell me to stop fucking around. It's the biggest bummer, dude.

You also have half of Megadeth's *Rust in Peace*-era lineup on the new album's two opening tracks.
Marty Friedman was the first guitarist we got in that was like, 'Oh my god!' levels of famous. I had a poster of him and Megadeth on my wall; he stared at me my entire youth. He ended up sending us multiple takes of different songs, telling us to use whatever we wanted and even comp if we needed to. A lot of other players are like, "You must only use this take as is, put nothing on it and fuck you!" Marty didn't care; he gave us the DI and said do whatever. That's why those songs ended up being so long. I felt like I needed to use all parts of the buffalo. He sent nothing bad, and even made his own completely different sections, so I actually had to rewrite my own songs! [*Laughs*] He's the most polite person, even when he's telling you the final mix isn't good enough. He doesn't yell, but in my head he does! And he was right.

Getting Nuno Bettencourt involved was a stroke of genius, too — given how rare it is for him to collaborate like this.
Nuno is the greatest of all time for me. It's funny, but he and Marty are total opposites. Marty is passive aggressive; he'll say, "You don't have to do what I tell you, but it might not be awesome!" Nuno is from Boston, so he *tells* you how it is. Whatever is going on in his mind, he says it. I've been begging him to work with us for years, and I even asked [*Extreme singer*] Gary Cherone, who I loosely know. I asked him how to get Nuno on a song and he said, "When you figure it out, let me know so I can tell the rest of Extreme!" I knew in my mind if I put Marty Friedman and Nuno Bettencourt on the same track — two guys who are known as shredders that hate the word "shred" and don't want to be associated with shred, but shred better than everybody — it would be special. And then there's Alex Skolnick and Richard Shaw. It was like getting pandas in a cage to play together at first.

What gear did you use to track your parts on the album?
I used some Eighties PRS guitars, and there are some Les Pauls in there as well. I probably used 25 to 30 guitars in total. For amps, the VHT Pittbull Ultra Lead is my favorite, and we were mixing different things until I got a Kemper. I remember seeing one and thinking there's no way it could sound as good. My friend called up a Michael Britt 5150 patch — I think they're some of the greatest amps ever made. I actually own a few. And I couldn't make any of my 5150s sound as good as that Kemper profile. I got really angry about it, so I decided to become a Kemper guy. They remove the idiocy and craziness of having to change tubes, choose cabs and set up mics.

More Than Notes

NUNO BETTENCOURT TALKS US THROUGH HIS GUEST PARTS ON "TAKE ANOTHER PIECE"

"A lot of it was improvised. Even when we shot the video, I probably played everything in the wrong place. I didn't write it down and couldn't remember exactly what I did, so I just faked my way through it. [*Laughs*] I don't do these things a lot, especially instrumental projects. The instrumental stuff from me has been very limited and generally just on Extreme albums. But Benny put a gun to my head and forced me to do it. I don't want to call it a neoclassical track, but it does have those orchestral elements. I didn't even know any of the other players on this track; I knew who they were but I didn't know them personally. It was really interesting to hear what I was doing going into someone else's completely different approach. You can hear different paintings in the same song, unique interpretations of ultimately the same sort of message.

"I guess what I'm doing is all from the Eddie Van Halen school of playing. I don't really orchestrate my leads. I just let the thing run and play to it. When I listen back, if I like 100 percent, then I'll keep it. If I like 20 percent, I'll take it somewhere else from there. So it might be built in that sense, but it's more of a magical thing that comes from jamming along to the music and seeing where it takes you freely, without too much thought. I've always been like that; I tend to learn things by ear instantly and just nail it. That's what works for me, rather than thinking too much. I always want my leads to be emotional. Even if you like the technical stuff, I want you to be distracted by the emotion first. That's the thing that makes you want to hear it again. It's how all my favorite guitar players made me feel."

[*from left*] Dead Sara's Siouxsie Medley, Sean Friday and Emily Armstrong

Dead Sara

HOW SIOUXSIE MEDLEY AND EMILY ARMSTRONG TAKE JONI MITCHELL'S APPROACH TO ALTERNATE TUNINGS AND APPLY IT TO THE FEROCIOUS WORLD OF ROCK 'N' ROLL

By Vincent Arrieta

> **"Open tunings just make more sense to how my brain is wired, so I just make up tunings"**
>
> *— SIOUXSIE MEDLEY*

WHEN WAS THE Last time you discovered a guitar player that made your chest rattle and the hair on your neck stand up? If you've truly kept your ear to the musical soil in the last decade, there's a pretty good chance Siouxsie Medley has done both. She and leather-lunged frontwoman Emily Armstrong lead the L.A. born-and-bred rock 'n' roll trio Dead Sara along with drummer/producer Sean Friday.

Dead Sara first broke through on active rock radio in 2012 with the single "Weatherman" from their self-titled debut album. After a tempestuous period of independent releases and label issues (which Armstrong chalks up to "bad management" at the time), Dead Sara finally found a stable home at Warner Records, who released the band's third full-length album, *Ain't It Tragic,* in September.

Medley's main studio guitar is a solid black Les Paul, substituted on the road with a much lighter Gibson Florentine after the Les Paul broke her ribs on tour due to her kinetic stage presence. "Twice," Medley asserts with a mile-wide smile.

After Armstrong developed an interest in alternate tunings influenced by folk music and the many tunings of Joni Mitchell, she and Medley applied that adventurousness to electric guitar arrangements and discovered what would become Dead Sara's signature tuning: "high G," in which the low E string is turned up to a G — the secret to the power of the "Weatherman" riff. Medley says folk-influenced open tunings are an essential element of Dead Sara's guitar attack — allowing for drones and unconventional fretwork that EADGBE doesn't enable. "Standard is the most confusing tuning for me," Medley says. "Open tunings just make more sense to how my brain is wired, so I just make up tunings."

Despite a formidable pedalboard, Medley's default sound is either a direct-to-amp tone ("2/3 of my set" she says) or a single Super Fuzz pedal. The rest of the sound is her fingers and choices, with the pedals acting as a supplement.

Armstrong, on the other hand, says she has a "love/hate" relationship with playing guitar live and acknowledges Medley's role as *the* guitarist, but is a significant contributor to the band's recorded layers of woven guitar, especially on *Ain't It Tragic*. "Sometimes Sean and I would be in the studio and we'd need to redo a guitar part... but I honestly don't remember which parts [*on the finished album*] are me and which are Siouxsie."

Starting in February, Dead Sara will be supporting Slash on his American tour backed by Myles Kennedy & The Conspirators. "Slash asked for *us*," Medley says. "Apparently he's a big fan!"

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Sue Foley

THIS CANADIAN-TURNED-TEXAN TURNS IN SOME SLINKY BLUES, COMPLETE WITH SRV DRUMMER CHRIS LAYTON AND HAMMOND B3 MASTER MIKE FLANIGIN

By Joe Bosso

Sue Foley in action with Pinky, her favorite Fender Telecaster

FOR THE PAST 34 years, Texas blues guitarist Sue Foley has had one instrument by her side — at every gig and on every album. It's the pink paisley Fender Telecaster she bought at a music store in Canada. From the moment she saw it, she felt drawn to it, and the second she plugged it in, she knew it was a lock. Foley promptly nicknamed the guitar "Pinky," and throughout the decades it's been her North Star.

"It's pretty precious to me," she says. "For the longest time, I never traveled with another guitar. If a string broke on Pinky, I would stand on stage and change it on the spot. Now I've got two backup Teles — they're both paisley — but Pinky's still the main one."

On her aptly named new album, *Pinky's Blues*, Foley pays tribute to the blues and roots music she fell in love with when she relocated from her native Canada to Texas in the mid Eighties. The guitarist and her ace band — bassist Jon Penner, drummer Chris Layton (of Stevie Ray Vaughan and Double Trouble fame) and producer-keyboardist Mike Flanigin — run through an inspired list of covers by Lone Star artists like Clarence "Gatemouth" Brown, Lavelle White, Frankie Lee Sims, Angela Strehli and Lillie Mae Donley. "Sometimes you feel like you're stepping on holy ground when you cover some of these songs," Foley says, "but on the other hand, you're paying homage, so you just try to do the material justice while offering your own perspective."

The album contains three self-penned originals, most notably the luminous instrumental title track, on which she demonstrates her robust vibrato. "It's kind of my rewrite of Earl Hooker's 'Blues in D Natural,'" Foley says. "Everybody who plays the blues has their own take on it." Another highlight is the driving "Dallas Man," a tip of the Stetson to her Texas six-string heroes, which showcases her supreme guitar work and her sultry singing to spectacular effect.

"Sometimes you feel like you're stepping on holy ground when you cover some of these songs"

"I could have called it 'Dallas Men,' she jokes. "The Dallas-Fort Worth area had all of these guys — Jimmie and Stevie Ray Vaughan, T-Bone Walker, Freddie King, Frankie Lee Sims and Anson Funderburgh. There must have been something in the water."

AXOLOGY

- **GUITAR** Late-Eighties Fender Telecaster (Pinky No. 1)
- **AMP** Fender '59 Bassman reissue
- **EFFECTS** Boss reverb, Strymon Flint Tremolo & Reverb

SCOTT DOUBT PHOTOGRAPHY

Spiritbox's Mike Stringer with an Aristides seven-stringer

Spiritbox

MIKE STRINGER STRIKES A BALANCE BETWEEN BRUTAL RIFFS AND AMBIENT BLISS ON *ETERNAL BLUE*

By Jim Beaugez

When we asked 70 pro guitarists to name their favorite new band or guitarist of 2021, Spiritbox (and Mike Stringer) were among the most common replies

DIGITAL RECORDING HAS enabled bands to layer a seemingly endless number of tracks on a song, but Spiritbox guitarist Mike Stringer can confirm there is, in fact, an end — he reached it while recording "Constance," the closing song on *Eternal Blue* [*Pale Chord/Rise*], his band's 2021 debut album.

"I think 'Constance' maxed out our producer's Pro Tools session for tracks, which is ridiculous," Stringer says.

Stringer's goal in layering was not to create an orchestra of guitars. Instead, layers of cleanly arpeggiating guitar lines flutter over dozens of ambience tracks and reverb tails, leading to an otherworldly dense expanse of down-tuned guitar sounds and textures. Most songs on *Eternal Blue*, though, contain a more manageable five to six tracks of guitar ambience to accompany his seven-string riffing.

Playing the grinding foil to vocalist Courtney LaPlante, Stringer puts a lot of work into figuring out which guitar chord voicings best showcase her vocals. "Being in a melodic band, the singing is so important — it's probably the most important aspect," he says. "I think for the most part I try to keep the chords as simple as possible, and then where I try to push things is in the layering."

Armed with an Aristides baritone seven-string outfitted with an Evertune bridge, and sometimes a multi-scale model, Stringer tunes down to F sharp, which necessitates a .73 gauge string at the low end and a conventional .10 at the high end. "You kinda get the best of both worlds," he says, "where you have that low end and that low register, but then the rest isn't too floppy and or too low for a singing part."

The guitar tones behind Spiritbox's crushing melodic djent on *Eternal Blue* are all plugins from the Nolly Neural DSP, which he says "fill up the mix perfectly." For the live show, Stringer opts for the Neural DSP Quad Cortex with a model of an Omega Granophyre amp he captured.

In between playing riffs and chords, Stringer is a master at placing pick scrapes and harmonics where they add an aggressive edge. "I love bands like Tony Danza Tap Dance Extravaganza and Gojira that use those pick scrapes," he says. "It just becomes a different part of the instrument, [*and*] it's so much fun to throw in extra harmonic scrapes and try to get a little deeper with it. 'How can I make this sound even more unique?'"

KYLE JOINSON

GW P.28

FAR BEYOND DRIVEN

NO MATTER WHAT KIND OF MUSIC YOU'RE INTO, THERE'S AN OVERDRIVE PEDAL (OR TWO) FOR YOU. IN THIS ISSUE, WE ROUND UP EIGHT OF OUR FAVORITES

BY AMIT SHARMA

FEW COMBINATIONS OF words seem to please guitarists as much as "more gain." For some, that might just mean an overdrive set low and used almost as a boost to subtly kiss their amp's front end. For others it can embody a whole new universe of soft or hard clipping, brimming with new opportunities for sustain and saturation. Since the invention of the Gibson Maestro FZ-1 Fuzz-Tone in 1962 and the Arbiter Fuzz Face in 1966 — and then the consequent arrival of Boss, MXR and Electro-Harmonix in the early Seventies — tone has become something of a personal quest for every player, using the right pedals and amps to best capture the magic in their hands.

As we all know, a good amp shouldn't need pedals, but that doesn't mean *you* won't. Overdrives can work like an extra channel, which is especially handy for low-gain single-channel combos, or as an EQ shift to help your leads cut through when performing with a live band. And for those hoping for something a little more radical, certain drives can drastically change the tone of what you're playing through — to the point where you're not just getting another channel, you're getting a whole new amp. Here's a closer look at eight of our favorite overdrive pedals around today.

IBANEZ
TUBE SCREAMER TS808 REISSUE

$179, ibanez.com

The Ibanez Tube Screamer is undoubtedly the most enduring overdrive of them all. It's been seen under the noses of guitarists in every genre, from blues and country to hard rock and metal, possessing the most widely cloned circuit of its kind. Though there have been numerous official incarnations of the soft-clipping green box over the years, such as the mini, dual-circuit and hot-rodded versions that are still available today, the TS808 is often regarded as the most classic. This reissue features the same JRC4558D IC chip and analog circuitry as the 1979 original — famous for its midrange bite — and also shares its vintage-style square footswitch. The lavish tones set the benchmark in the Eighties and continue to do so today.

BOSS

JB-2 ANGRY DRIVER

$199, boss.info

There have been many collaborations between the larger pedal manufacturers and smaller boutique-style brands over the last decade or so — indeed, some more enticing than others. Announced back in September 2017, the JB-2 is easily one of the finest examples, pairing up one of Boss' most underrated pedals, the BD-2 Blues Driver, with the Andy Timmons-approved JHS Pedals Angry Charlie distortion into one standard-sized enclosure. Both circuits can be run individually or in tandem with separate concentric controls for Level, Tone and Drive — totaling six modes of series and parallel configurations that can take you from light boost to hellish distortion.

KLON

KTR

$300, instagram.com/klonllc

Designed and manufactured by Bill Finnegan between 1994 and 2008, the Klon Centaur has become arguably the most highly coveted overdrive, with famous users including Jeff Beck, Noel Gallagher and Josh Homme. The originals, of which 8,000 or so were made, can fetch up to around $5,000, though luckily Finnegan has been producing the KTR models since 2014 at a much more affordable, though still boutique, price point. The innovative hard-clipping circuit, which uses an IC MAX1044 voltage converter and two germanium diodes to create a harmonically rich boost and "transparent" overdrive, has been infinitely copied (or "kloned") by other companies over the last five years — hence the KTR's disclaimer: "Kindly remember: The ridiculous hype that offends so many is not of my making." After a hiatus in production and some minor tweaks to the legendary circuit following a shortage of NOS diodes, the KTR — the only drive able to call itself the Klon's official successor — will return this year.

SINCE THE CELEBRATED INVENTION OF THE GIBSON MAESTRO FZ-1 FUZZ-TONE IN 1962 AND THE ARBITER FUZZ FACE IN 1966, TONE HAS BECOME SOMETHING OF A PERSONAL QUEST FOR JUST ABOUT EVERY GUITAR PLAYER

EARTHQUAKER DEVICES

PLUMES SMALL SIGNAL SHREDDER

$99, earthquakerdevices.com

There are many reasons this EarthQuaker overdrive, launched in 2019, is fast becoming one of the most popular 808-inspired pedals. It offers more headroom, clarity and gain than your typical Tube Screamer as well as the choice of three clipping modes (symmetrical LED, asymmetrical silicon and no diode OpAmp drive) for less than a hundred bucks. It's a small box capable of some seriously massive sounds — just ask Slipknot guitarist Mick Thomson, who used one for his leads and solos on their last world tour, or Denver doom metallers Khemmis, who pushed their Orange amps into overload on last year's *Deceiver*.

P.30

KING TONE
THE DUELLIST
$349, kingtoneguitar.com

As many of us will have painfully learned at some point or another, sorry folks, there is no pedal that will magically turn you into Stevie Ray Vaughan. But if you're attempting any sort of tonal resemblance to the late Texas blues maestro, The Duellist's built-in SRV mod will definitely get you as close as humanly possible in pedal form. It features two channels that can be split and used in different places on your board, each with Fat, Stock and Glass modes, plus more options from the six-position dip switch found on the side. If you need more convincing, just look up any recent live footage of Josh Smith, and he'll do the rest.

FRIEDMAN
BE-OD
$199, friedman amplification.com

Favored by the likes of Jerry Cantrell, Bill Kelliher and Steve Stevens — all of whom have gone on to release their own signature heads through Friedman — the BE-100 has become one of the most universally admired amps of its kind, echoing the tonal characteristics of a modded Eighties Marshall. The BE-OD reimagines that notoriously thick high gain in pedal size and with great success, having made it onto the pedalboards of Tosin Abasi (Animals As Leaders), Aaron Marshall (Intervals) and Andy Williams (Every Time I Die) since its launch in 2016. The six controls play a big part in its popularity, including dials for Presence and Tightness, plus an additional internal trim pot to adjust the overall gain.

XOTIC
SL DRIVE
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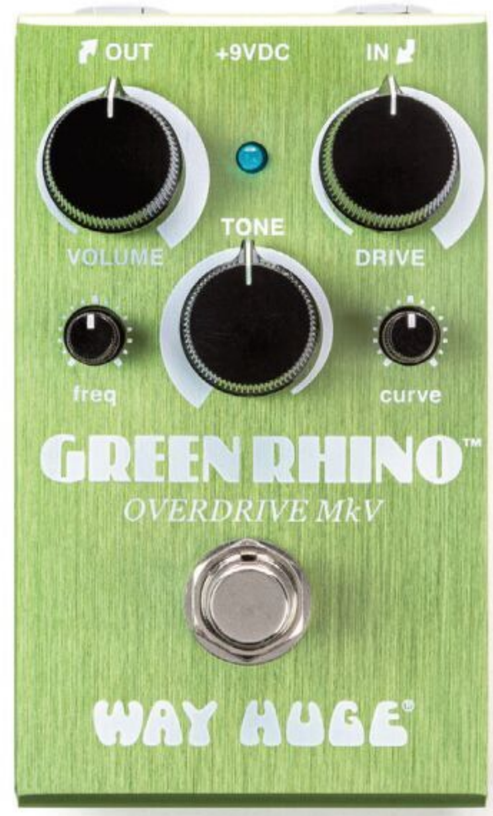

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Glenn Tipton on stage with Judas Priest in Tokyo, July 1978

UNLEASHED

GLENN TIPTON LOOKS BACK AT 50 YEARS OF TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY IN JUDAS PRIEST

LIKE HIS BANDMATES, JUDAS PRIEST guitarist Glenn Tipton is getting ready for another victory lap to celebrate 50-plus years of the group's eclectic, groundbreaking metal. Priest plan to resume their 50th Anniversary tour on March 4 in Peoria, Illinois, and dates are scheduled through June 14 in the band's hometown of Birmingham, England, barring any more unexpected setbacks.

To coincide with the tour, Judas Priest released the mammoth 42-disc box set, *50 Heavy Metal Years of Music*, which includes every album from their catalog as well as 13 previously unreleased discs of live material spanning from 1979 to 1991. Also available is the 16-track single-disc taster, *Reflections: 50 Heavy Metal Years of Music*, a best-of that features nine album tracks and six live cuts from the box. *50 Heavy Metal Years of Music* was entirely remastered by Tom Allom, who first worked with Judas Priest on the 1979 concert album *Unleashed in the East*, and who produced most of their best-selling records, including *British Steel* and *Screaming for Vengeance*.

"To have a box set that is so all-encompassing and covers all our time with Judas Priest is amazing," says Tipton from his estate in England. "Fifty years is a long time. You never think you'll go on this long. I never thought I'd still be around now, let alone writing songs and performing a bit."

It's always a little strange for pioneer artists to pore through their back catalogs and unearth past stepping stones and revelations. For Tipton, it's especially bittersweet since he's coping with and combating Parkinson's disease and has been unable to tour with Judas Priest since 2018, when producer Andy Sneap was recruited as the band's second guitarist on stage. Since then, Tipton has performed encores as a special guest at various shows.

"I have good days and bad days," Tipton says, speaking candidly about the illness he has struggled with for more than a decade. "I have to take my moment to catch a wave, if you know what I mean. But to walk onstage at the beginning of a show and hear the crowd scream, and then you kick into a Priest number — I miss that a lot."

BY **JON WIEDERHORN** ● PHOTOS BY **GETTY IMAGES**

In one of the few interviews Tipton has set up, the guitarist talks about the box set, reveals details about the band's next studio album, reminisces over some of his proudest moments in Judas Priest and discusses how guitarist Richie Faulkner injected new life into the band, and Faulkner's near-death experience onstage in Kentucky last September. Tipton also reveals — for the first time — details about a mishap he had in 2021 that left him practically freezing to death. And, after holding his tongue for years, he pointedly responds to disparaging allegations and accusations from founding Priest guitarist K.K. Downing.

How did you choose which albums and live recordings to include in *50 Heavy Metal Years of Music*?
All the albums are in there — every Priest record and live album, including the ones we did with Tim [*"Ripper" Owens"*]. And then for the [*previously unreleased*] live stuff, we used whatever we could get our hands on. We had quite a bit of input from everyone in the band into which songs we thought were good, and then we left most of the work to Tom [*Allom*] to pick and choose the tracks and see what he could do with them. He has always been involved in our live work and I think it turned out really good. It was interesting to look back over the years and remember certain venues or gigs. It really took us back.

Were you surprised by any of the old recordings — maybe something you hadn't heard before and really liked?
There weren't any surprises in there, but there were things I'd forgotten about. You find a few parts lurking around the corners of the tapes. It's always interesting when you take time to go through stuff you haven't heard in a long time. Plus, there were bits and pieces we never used that were fun to hear.

Did any of the parts you unearthed inspire you in any way for the next Priest album? Or were there any riffs you liked that you may use?
There's nothing we dusted off and decided to use. Things that went on the shelf with Priest generally stayed on the shelf. If we didn't use something, we usually said we were going to use it in the future, but we never really got around to it. We preferred to come up with fresh things every time.

Judas Priest brought so much to metal guitar, including overdriven, palm-muted chugging, a fist-tight two-guitar attack, incisive licks, guitar harmonies and dueling leads. Is there anything you introduced to the genre that you're especially proud of?
My classical influence, which is from my mother, and that encouraged me to inject a lot of melody into Priest. Hopefully, I've influenced some people to take up the guitar and realize there's more to it than playing a thousand notes a second. Melody is a unique thing in the sense that it can change a song completely. I believe our music has encouraged some people to search deeper when they're composing lead breaks or songs, and I'm proud of that. I'm also proud that there are people who decided to start playing guitar after they heard Priest for the first time. If you can inspire people to pick up an instrument, you can change their lives.

The guitar work in Judas Priest has rubbed off on so many styles of metal: the New Wave of British Heavy Metal, thrash, melodic death metal, and even metalcore. Do you ever feel like any of those subsequent bands perhaps

Tipton during a 2004 OzzFest show

"IT STARTED TO RAIN AND I THOUGHT I MIGHT CATCH MY DEATH FROM THE COLD. IT WAS THE WORST NIGHT OF MY LIFE"

THEO WARGO/WIREIMAGE

bastardized what you pioneered?
I used to get asked, "What did you think of the punk and new wave era?" Truthfully, I thought it was great because without too much skill people can come up with songs that have so much energy. We tend to learn from everybody and I'm not ashamed to admit it. That era gave us a kick up the backside to become more motivated and to write songs that were more gritty and rough. As a musician, you get something from everything and I definitely was altered by new wave and punk. I'm flattered by anyone who gets anything from our music, and I just think that if you keep an open mind you can learn something from everybody, and you should.

What can you say about the next Judas Priest studio album? Were you able to work on it between 2019 and 2020 when Covid shut down the tour business?
No, the pandemic stopped us in our tracks. But me, Richie, and [*vocalist*] Rob [*Halford*] went into the studio and wrote some stuff before that. I'm really happy with what we've done. The riffs are very strong and I think it will be a great album. If you went back and listened to the last two albums, you can feel the creativity there, and there's a lot more to come.

Were you able to play guitar parts for the next album or did you communicate your musical ideas to Richie and have him play them?
I went into it with the understanding that I had to adapt. I have to realize my limitations. Basically, you just have to deal with what life throws at you and make the best of it. I don't try to set the mark too high now because, obviously, my condition means I can't play guitar like I used to. But I can still build songs and I can still get a mean riff out. So we'll see how it goes when we get back in there and continue writing. I'm very much looking forward to that.

In August 2021 at Bloodstock Open Air in Walton-on-Trent, Derbyshire, you joined Priest at their first show in two years to play "Metal Gods," "Breaking the Law" and "Living After Midnight." Do you plan to make more special appearances during the remaining anniversary shows?
I certainly hope to get up to maybe play a few numbers and encores. And, honestly, I look forward to that just as much as I used to. When you hear that crowd roar, there's no other feeling like it. But I have to be realistic. If I feel up to it, I'll do it [*at some shows*], but I have a family and I'm not going to jeopardize my health.

On September 26 at the Louder Than Life festival in Louisville, Kentucky, Richie suffered an acute cardiac aortic dissection onstage during the closing number, "Painkiller." The condition is often fatal, but the venue was near Rudd Heart & Lung Center at University of Louisville Health at Jewish Hospital, which had the staff and technology to perform a 10-hour emergency procedure that saved his life. Is Richie back up to speed or is he still regaining his strength from the condition and his post-op rehabilitation?
I've talked to him and he's pretty much up to speed. It's incredible. He really had a close shave. But he's amazing. He never puts that guitar down. I spoke to him briefly two or three nights ago, and he sounded good. But you have to be careful with any problems like that because what you need is rest. And what he wants to do is play the guitar, and that's not always restful.

At the same time, the guitar can be a great therapeutic tool. When patients come out of a major trauma, they often want to get back into their comfort zone and Richie looks more comfortable than ever when he's sitting there just noodling away.
He's a very talented player and a strong character. To pull through that and get to where he's gotten now and be determined to get back in shape takes a lot of effort. And when he was getting back up to speed, it was probably very hard for him because he didn't have a lot of energy. But like I say, he's doing good and he's enjoying playing the guitar.

You suffered your own setback recently when you were outside your house with your dog. It wasn't exactly a brush with death, but it might have been.
Four months ago, I fell down a riverbank and shattered my shoulder and broke my arm. I couldn't move. It was about nine o'clock at night and I jumped down to this path and my foot slipped and I fell and landed on my shoulder. I couldn't get up. I couldn't put any pressure on the arm to give me leverage to stand. I had to stay in that position all night. It started to rain and I thought I might catch my death from the cold. It was the worst night of my life. My dog, a German wirehaired pointer, stayed with me for 10 hours. In the early morning, the guy that looks after my land and the estate knew something was wrong because he couldn't see the dog. So he went down to look around and then he saw the dog and me and got me help.

You've always been the quintessential polite English gentleman. The same could be said for most everyone in Priest, until recently. Over the past couple years, former Priest guitarist K.K. Downing has been bad mouthing you and the rest of the band. First, he made some comments in his 2018 book *Heavy Duty: Days and Nights in Judas Priest*. More recently, when he released the first album by his new band KK's Priest, *Sermons of the Sinner*, he targeted you with more accusations [*Holiday 2021* GW].
You know, I never wanted to get into a public argument after K.K. left. I never said a word and I stuck to my guns for over 10 years, but

TOM ALLOM: THE MASTER BEHIND THE JUDAS PRIEST REMASTERS

DESPITE HAVING RECORDED the first two heralded metal albums in 1970, Black Sabbath's self-titled album and its follow-up, *Paranoid*, Tom Allom wasn't a scruffy, scrappy rocker and didn't immediately click with Judas Priest when they were first introduced. "They were working-class lads from Birmingham and they thought I was too posh," Allom recalls. Regardless, Priest's label hired Allom to work with Judas Priest to mix their 1979 live album *Unleashed in the East*, and within weeks a heavy metal union was formed. The first full-length Priest album Allom produced was 1980's *British Steel*, and he worked on the band's next seven releases and returned to co-produce 2018's *Firepower* and remastered *50 Heavy Metal Years of Music*. Here, Allom opens up the secrets of the box and more.

How did you get roped into remastering every album in Judas Priest's catalog and assembling 13 new live albums in less than a year?
I think they were punishing me for something. I'm joking. Someone at Sony just called me and asked if I was interested, but it was quite a bit of work. Three of the live albums came from multi-track recordings, which were pretty good. The first one was the Mud Club live show from 1979, which was right before I started officially working with the band. And then there was a show in Houston and one in New Haven, Connecticut. But then I got a whole slew of CDs of unreleased stuff and some of it was really awful. It sounded like it was recorded on a Sony Walkman in someone's back pocket, with his ass blocking out most of the sound. Honestly, I have no idea where some of these things came from. There were some pretty serious technical problems with those, but I

did everything I could to make them sound halfway decent.

Did any of the studio albums require major tweaking or rejiggering?
Actually, I didn't want to mess with the sound of the original CDs at all. There have been so many remastered versions of that stuff, and each time the albums get remastered they're remastered from previous remasters. In the end, they sound quite different from the way they were intended. So I just went back to the original CDs and used them because, obviously, we didn't have the original tapes.

Did anyone have any problem with your decision to return the albums to their original forms?
Some people who heard the recordings said, "Wait a minute. Some of the CDs are much quieter than some of the others. What happened?" Here's what happened. In the late Eighties, CDs were remastered to be louder and louder. I've heard remasters of albums I did that don't sound anything like the original mixes. They just don't breathe. They don't have that air in them because they're slammed to the maximum level. That's why I went back to the original CDs on the box set. With the albums Judas Priest did when Ripper was in the band and then on a couple albums when Rob rejoined, there was still this obsession with making them as loud as possible, and in my view it absolutely ruined the original feel of the albums. When it came to *Firepower*, Andy Sneap and I were very aware that it needed to be loud, but it needed to breathe as well.

What do you remember about the first time you met Priest in the late Seventies?
I think we were in a pub called The Royal Oak around the corner from their management's office. I didn't know anything about them. I didn't know very much about heavy metal, despite the fact that I had previously worked with Sabbath. So I was introduced to the guys in this pub and I don't think they were particularly interested in meeting me. But I had just done a live album with Pat Travers, so I got thrown together with them to mix *Unleashed in the East*. A couple weeks later, we were getting on famously and that cemented our friendship and working relationship.

Legend has it that *Unleashed in the East* wasn't a good recording and you did tons of redubs with them to make it one of the greatest live metal albums.

there comes a point when you read things that have been said that are just crazy. It's time to say something, really because he's saying things that he really shouldn't be saying. They aren't fair.

Are they mean or are they untrue?
Both. He's insinuated that he was the driving force of the band. It just isn't true, you know? Priest are made up of five guys working together. They're not just one person driving the band. He's said all these things that, I think, are meant to upset us and get us to say something in response and for a long time we didn't. But I've got a lot to say and enough's enough.

K.K. seems unhappy he's no longer in the band. He said that the Epitaph tour in 2011 and 2012 was supposed to be a farewell run and that you had all agreed to break up after the dates. So when he quit the band before the tour, he claims he did so under the impression that there would be no more Judas Priest studio albums or shows. In other words, you were all leaving the band after the tour.
We spoke about what was probably going to be our farewell tour, and then Ken [*K.K.*] quit. Nothing could have been worse because after you play for all those years, you plan your farewell tour to sign off in a good way. All of a sudden, Ken quit and we didn't know what to do. It was a nightmare. It was only when we found Richie that we realized we could go on and play the tour and then more. Richie injected so much speed and energy into the band that we decided to continue. He's such a great fellow and a great player. When he doesn't know there's anyone around and he's in the studio just playing random things, some of the stuff he comes up with is breathtaking, even for me. He can play anything.

What did K.K. say about you that was most upsetting?
There was that ridiculous thing he said about me having to play the last note at a concert [*so I would come across as the band's star guitarist*]. The fans aren't stupid. They know what's true and what isn't true.

Were those accusations unexpected?
They were surprising.

One of K.K.'s more personal jabs was that you were drinking too much on stage and your playing was sloppy during his final tours with the band.
That's silly, really, and everyone knows it's not true. The fans aren't stupid and they've seen me for 50 years playing around the world. I may have had a couple of beers onstage, but that's all. It's never affected the concert or my performance whatsoever and he knows that. Also, he said we asked him to play the hard parts. Just tell that to Tom Allom and he'll fall down laughing. Anyone who's worked with us in the studio or live knows who plays the hard

"I JUST WISH [K.K. DOWNING] WOULD GROW UP A BIT AND STOP SAYING RIDICULOUS THINGS"

parts. Ken was there most of the time with me and we've written songs together. I've done nothing but help Ken.

Did he need help?
I used to piece his leads together and I did a lot of editing to make his lead breaks worthwhile. I would never have talked about Ken that way, it's just that his accusations have gotten sillier and sillier — and I deserve [*the chance*] to respond. He left the band. We couldn't convince him to stay. And then he accused me of taking six years off to write two solo albums. I only did the solo albums because we were inactive at the time while Rob was doing his solo things.

After you announced you weren't going to play the Firepower tour, K.K. seemed hurt that he wasn't asked to rejoin. He said he contacted bassist Ian Hill, who sent him a setlist, but nothing ever happened.
He never approached any of the band and asked to rejoin, so for all we knew, he didn't want to rejoin. He said he wanted to leave the band and then leave the music industry. He told us he was desperate for a new kind of life.

He didn't ask to rejoin for the Firepower tour?
No. Right before we got Richie, Ian said, "If you really want to come back, you'd better come back now" because we were moving on. But he didn't do anything. He didn't ask to come back. And then after he was out, he said all sorts of ridiculous things. He tried

[*from left*] Judas Priest's K.K. Downing, Rob Halford and Glenn Tipton on stage at Long Island's Nassau Coliseum in 1984

EBET ROBERTS/GETTY IMAGES

to take credit for just about everything — the stage clothes, the image, the songwriting. He refers to them as *his* songs. He's got to be joking. Everybody knows who wrote the songs, and that's being kind. But whatever the case was, we've always made it clear that all of the decisions we made were made by the band as a whole, without exception. If anyone doesn't agree with something, it isn't used. That's the way we've always worked.

It must have taken a lot of willpower to keep your silence for so long.

I never wanted this kind of back-and-forth thing, but you can imagine how I feel — especially now that my playing has become more difficult — and he's continued bashing me in the press and in his book.

Was there always tension between you and K.K.?

That's the thing. I always considered me and Ken to be friends. We had some great times. We've been fishing together. We played tennis in courts that were so rough there were roots growing up through the cracks. We've sat on the 18th hole of many golf courses and had a laugh. So it shouldn't be like this.

Were you surprised that the new KK's Priest album is called *Sermons of the Sinner*, an obvious reference to the Priest song "The Sinner," and that his lyrics are filled with animosity against Judas Priest? Also, "The Return of the Sentinel" includes the opening guitar line from the Priest song "The Sentinel."

I suppose if I left a band and regretted it then I'd try to regain that energy from tracks I'd loved and played throughout the years. Therefore, I suppose it's a natural thing to want to lean toward the music that you love. So I can understand that. I just can't understand why he's saying things that people know aren't true.

Do you think it's strange that K.K. hired ex-Priest vocalist Tim "Ripper" Owens and worked with drummer Les Binks? Does it seem he's trying too hard to step back up on the Priest pedestal?

It's difficult for me to comment on that, really. When I did my solo album, the songs were very un-Priest-like. They were just songs I wanted to get off my chest. Why would I want to play something that sounded like Priest? I think a solo album should be different from your main band because you let your emotions come out in different ways. But Ken wanted to make music like he did in Priest. I have no problem with Ripper [*being involved*]. I always got along with him. Tim's a good singer and it was good to play with him in Priest for a number of years.

So, you're okay with Judas Priest and K.K.'s Priest existing at the same time.

I just wish he'd grow up a bit and stop saying ridiculous things. I'd like to see both bands go on and enjoy heavy metal, as you should do. It would be nice to see our careers out together, even if we're in different bands. GW

Actually, only the vocals were significantly changed. Rob's voice was shot to ribbons when he did that show. It was the end of the tour and I think he had laryngitis. So, we got together at Tittenhurst Park and it was a beautiful summer day in June. I said to Rob, "Okay, you're gonna stand on the terrace and look out at these 80 acres of gorgeous trees, and what you're looking at aren't trees, they're 100,000 Judas Priest fans." I handed him a Shure SM57 microphone and played the whole show front to back. I told him I wasn't going to stop and he should sing the entire concert. He did it in one take so it was very much a live performance.

"I KNOW PEOPLE CALL IT 'UNLEASHED IN THE STUDIO,' BUT IT WASN'T LIKE THAT AT ALL. I WAS THERE"

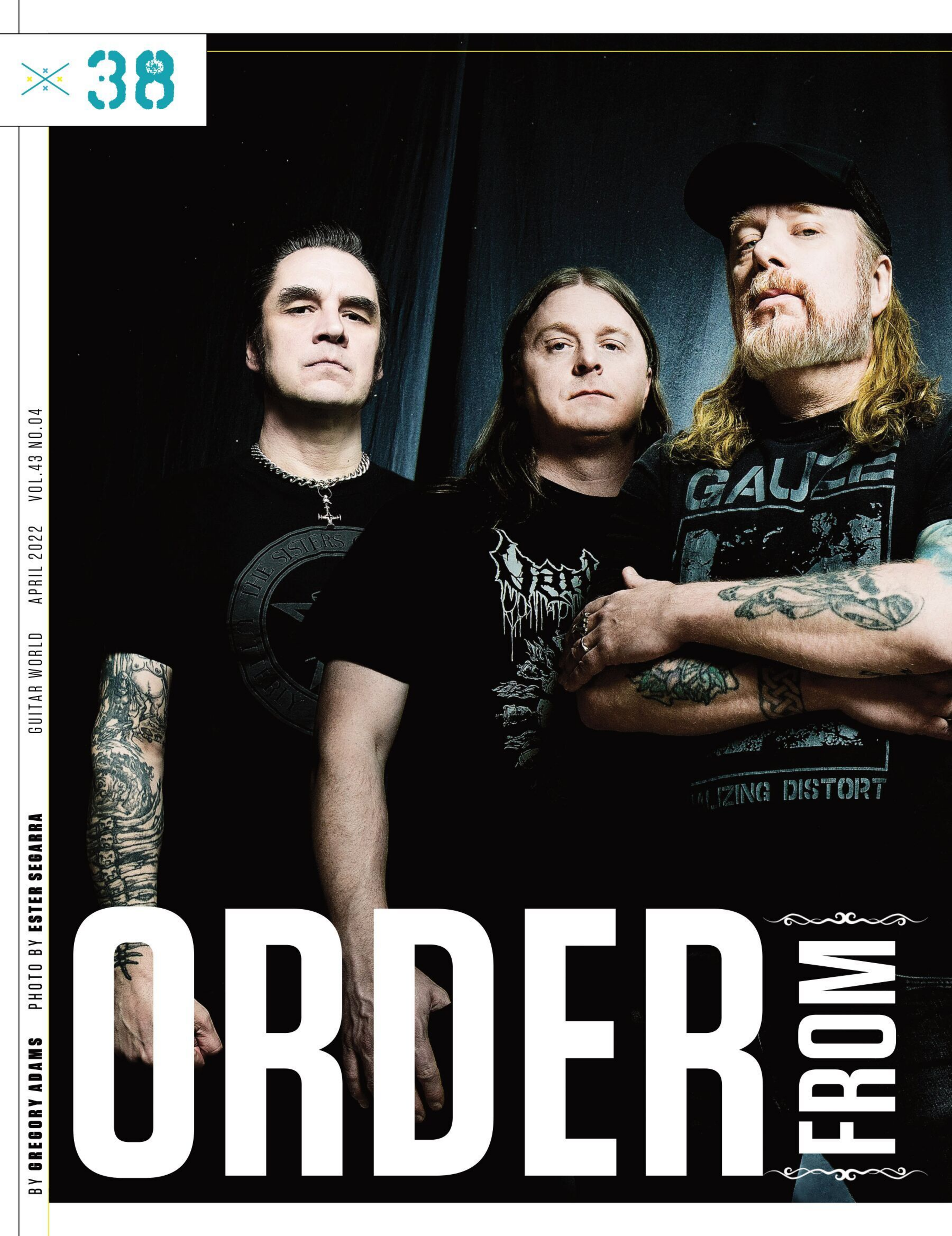
Didn't you also do a lot of work with the guitars on that album?

That's what everybody says, but it couldn't be further from the truth because the performance was great. There were some small problems that we tried to correct, but it's so difficult to record a guitar overdub that matches something done live. You can do it now with plug-ins, but back then it was bloody near impossible. I know people call it "Unleashed in the Studio," but it wasn't like that at all. I was there. I did it. And I think that's one of the reasons they asked me back for *British Steel* because we were able to quickly sort out what could have been a big problem.

You worked as Judas Priest's producer from *British Steel* in 1980 through *Ram It Down* in 1988, then you returned for *Firepower* in 2018. Do you think you'll be there for the band's next studio album?

I certainly hope so, but I don't know where the next album is coming from musically. I've heard some ideas and they're really good. I hope Andy Sneap is involved again as well because he's a phenomenal heavy music producer. I think we work really well together and I'm really hoping we get to do that soon. — *Jon Wiederhorn*

BY **GREGORY ADAMS** PHOTO BY **ESTER SEGARRA**



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CHAOS

Three albums into their reunion phase, *The Nightmare of Being* finds Swedish death metalers At the Gates addressing their legacy while pushing off into wild new horizons

THE ABSENCE OF LIVE MUSIC AT the start of the pandemic made Swedish metal icons At the Gates especially nostalgic for some of their favorite concert moments. Understandably, when lockdowns began ramping up in earnest around the spring of 2020, the quintet saw festival appearances booked for that summer go by the wayside — with makeup dates being pushed well off into the distance. Since they weren't stepping onstage any time soon, At the Gates used the downtime to write and record *The Nightmare of Being*, their third album since reforming in 2007, and seventh overall. Naturally, it finds the band delivering the patented, high-speed grafting of neo-classical melodies, old-school death and NWOBHM-inspired guitar twinning — often referred to as the "Gothenburg sound," after the Scandinavian city in which many of them grew up — that firmly cemented 1995 landmark release *Slaughter of the Soul* into the heavy metal hall of fame.

[*from left*] At the Gates' Adrian Erlandsson (drums), Jonas Björler (bass) and Tomas Lindberg (vocals), followed by guitarists Jonas Stålhammar and Martin Larsson

Some 30 years into their career, however, *The Nightmare of Being* is perhaps At the Gates' most ambitious offering yet, emboldening that foundation with high-contrast elements of symphonic black metal ("Touched by the White Hands of Death"), decidedly chewier desert rock grooving ("Cosmic Pessimism") and even moody, saxophone-wailing prog rock ("Garden of Cyrus").

Pushing the perception of At the Gates was, in part, inspired by the act's epic performance at Netherlands metal festival Roadburn in 2019. Though still centered on certified wreckers and deep cuts from their back catalog, the set was also marked by seemingly left-field covers, like a dive into the discordant funkiness of King Crimson's "Red," or by adapting the atmospheric, synth-and-chant arrangement of avant composer Philip Glass' theme from early Eighties experimental film *Koyaanisqatsi*. In terms of where it would eventually take them on this latest album, the concert was an eye-opener for At the Gates, and proof that they could broaden their sound without sacrificing any intensity.

"Roadburn [*was*] a perfect place to play those songs, and also to try different things," longtime guitarist Martin Larsson explains over a Zoom call with *Guitar World* — bespectacled lead guitarist Jonas Stålhammar seated directly to his left, bassist and songwriter Jonas Björler connected to the chat through a separate video screen. "We tried to give the big picture of where we're coming from [*by*] playing a few of our favorite songs that we grew up with. We did the Trouble song [*"The Tempter"*] for the metal influence, a Philip Glass song for the modern classical influence, and we did a King Crimson cover to show that part of what we're about. Doing all that live proved — mostly to ourselves — that we could branch out even more. I think we've wanted to do that for quite a while."

At the Gates formed in 1990 in Gothenburg while the group were still teenagers, with the music on their earliest records generally written by then-guitarists Alf Svensson and Björler's twin brother, Anders — vocalist Tomas Lindberg handled lyrics. After releasing a pair of brutalizing, yet melodically melancholic full-lengths, Svensson left the band in 1993. Anders Björler assumed the role of lead guitarist, while the band drafted local riffer Larsson into the lineup to jud out rhythms on the following year's *Terminal Spirit Disease*. Though the record was pivotal in the sense that it was the first At the Gates record to have the Björler brothers writing in tandem, the siblings fully canonized the group's razor-sharp twist on melodic death metal through the ruthless, all-killer strafing of their next release, *Slaughter of the Soul*.

"I LOVE PROGRESSIVE ROCK MORE THAN I LOVE METAL — IT'S ALWAYS BEEN MORE INSPIRATIONAL TO ME. PLAYING THIS KIND OF METAL WAS MORE OR LESS COMPLETELY NEW TO ME"
—JONAS STÅLHAMMAR

While, in retrospect, the band felt debut album *The Red in the Sky Is Ours* featured a few too many riff-stacking exercises — bassist Björler remarked in a 2007 interview that they tried "too hard to impress people with too many riffs and weird songwriting" — by the time they go to *Slaughter,* tracks like "Blinded by Fear" and the titular "Slaughter of the Soul" distilled At the Gates down to its essence: viciously lean thrash arrangements; finger-blistering tremolo sections; and hooky, Maiden-esque harmonies. Lindberg, meanwhile, grittily got into social issues like gun violence, this in part inspired after viewing crime flicks like *Reservoir Dogs* and *Menace II Society*. On top of Larsson and Anders Björler's feverish riffing, King Diamond guitarist Andy La Rocque seared out an especially fiery solo on the record's "Cold" — a fate-sealing collaboration that continues between La Rocque and At the Gates.

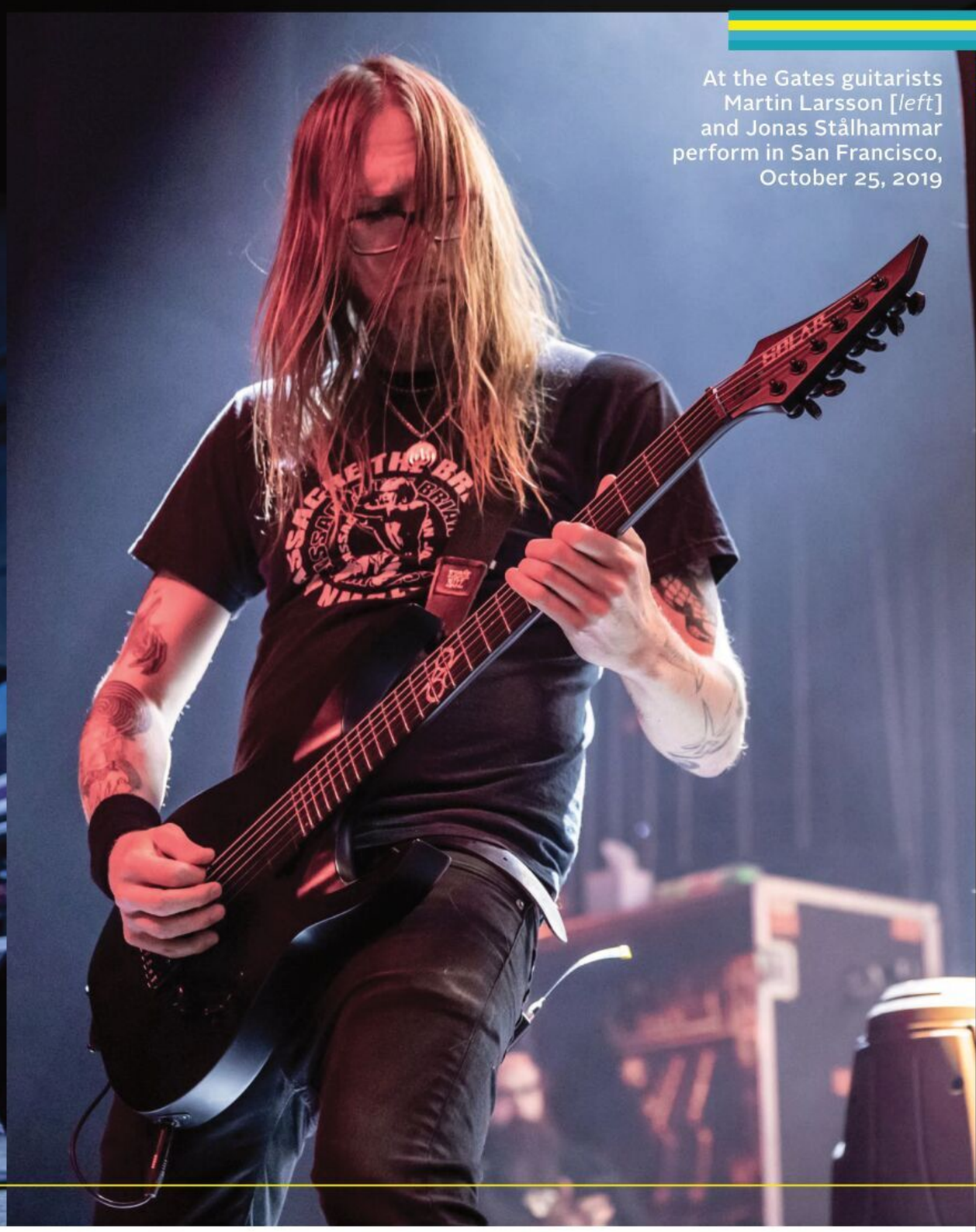
Less than a year on from that iconic release, though, the band split up. The Björlers and At the Gates drummer Adrian Erlandsson would quickly form similarly minded outfit the Haunted (melodic death metal veterans in their own right, Erlandsson and Jonas Björler continue to play with the group), while Lindberg went off into a punkier, d-beat direction by joining Disfear in 1998. Many years and outside efforts would pass before the *Slaughter of the Soul* lineup reunited in 2007 for live dates; it wasn't until 2014 that the group delivered comeback LP *At War with Reality*. It was a menacing return to form, but Anders Björler departed the group in 2017. Following his brother's exit, the bass-playing Björler — with some reticence — took over full songwriting duties on both 2018's *To Drink from the Night Itself* and *The Nightmare of Being*.

"It's really hard when you do it yourself, but I like to have a really broad range of ideas when I'm going into an album — so we have fast, we have slow, we have heavy, we have melodic," Björler says of his process. As hinted at by Larsson, some of At the Gates' diverse *Nightmare* did indeed begin taking shape ahead of that eclectic outward display at Roadburn. Björler confirms that he'd started sculpting full-bore bangers like "The Paradox" and album opener "Spectre of Extinction," in particular, while At the Gates were on a fall 2018 U.S. tour with Behemoth — and with the latter in mind, the intro was fit with a riff the bassist had found on an old hard drive of ideas from about a half-decade earlier.

The impressive acoustic section that leads "Spectre of Extinction," however, wasn't performed on the LP by Larsson or Stålhammar, but rather by guest musician Gunnar Hjorth, a classically trained player Björler knows from his neighborhood. The band eventually ramps up into a metal-style variation of the theme, with Larsson and Stålhammar jovially bending out their guitarmonies. Lindberg has explained that the record revolves around themes of pessimism, but musically this is arguably At the Gates at their peppiest. Larsson and Stålhammar explain that the anthemic "Spectre of Extinction" appeals to their shared affinity for classic Judas Priest — a true Tipton and Downing moment, at least until the song darts off into a detuned, nitro-fueled death-thrash hybrid.

Though Stålhammar joined the band in 2017, he'd been in At the Gates general sphere for years. Funnily enough, at one point in the late '00s he was the vocalist for the Crown, a band Lindberg had fronted a few years earlier. By 2016, both musicians, along with drummer Erlandsson, linked up for the Lurking Fear project, with Stålhammar on guitar and Lindberg on the mic. Standing as somewhat of a test run of his abilities, the speedy, clear-cut pummeling of the Lurking Fear's 2017 debut, *Out of the Voiceless Grave,* was released just one month before Stålhammar officially entered At the Gates; the band's latest terror-thrashing album, *Death, Madness, Horror, Decay,* was released this past fall.

"I've been playing metal just as long as everyone else in the band, but I've always played a more meat-and-potatoes kind of metal — simpler; more straightforward," Stålhammar says. "At the same time, I can do weird stuff. I love progressive rock more than I love metal — it's always been more inspirational to me. Playing this kind of metal was more or less completely new to



At the Gates guitarists Martin Larsson [*left*] and Jonas Stålhammar perform in San Francisco, October 25, 2019

MIIKKA SKAFFARI/FILMMAGIC

me [*when I joined At the Gates*]. It's not like relearning how to play guitar again, because you more or less know the basics... but joining the band pushed me."

While At the Gates would eventually take Stålhammar's technique into a new direction, the grand majority of 2018's *To Drink from the Night Itself* was pretty well demoed and charted out by the time he entered the lineup. Though he's on the recordings, the guitarist's leads had already been composed by principal songwriter Björler. The bassist likewise demoed out solo ideas for *The Nightmare of Being*, but this time around Stålhammar had a more active role in sculpting the end result.

"Jonas was bouncing ideas off of me when it came to the solos," Stålhammar says. "It was more collaborative."

The bassist and lead guitarist point to the spacious, evocative hammer-ons and classic, ascending runs that Stålhammar brings to "The Paradox" as a particularly inspired collaboration of theirs. Stålhammar also says another favorite passage of his is on "The Abstract Enthroned," where a series of doom-laden trills and big bends cast a gloriously gloomy pall on the track ahead of a timeless fadeout ("It's so sad and dark, yet hopeful at the same time," he says). While the studio trick gives the song an unearthly, never-ending ambiance, Björler confesses that he wasn't entirely on board with this particular mixing decision. "That's like a compromise, to me, when you fade out of a song," Björler says. Without missing a beat, Stålhammar comically quips, "some of the best parts come after the fade," which only rankles the bassist further. "You could easily have added a few more bars [*in the mix*]... but it's OK."

Some leads, meanwhile, managed to run longer as the sessions went on. Take the aforementioned "Spectre of Extinction," which once again features Andy La Rocque ripping out high-velocity runs alongside At the Gates. It's become a recurring theme for the band to turn to one of their closest collaborators and heavy metal heroes for a lead. In addition to his solo on *Slaughter of the Soul* standout "Cold," La Rocque was also brought aboard to wail over *To Drink from the Night Itself*'s hard-swung "In Nameless Sleep." When it came time to lay down the lead for "Spectre of Extinction," the Swedish hard rocker's mellifluous fretboarding was apparently too good to keep confined to just a few bars. Björler explains: "We actually doubled the length of the solo, because it was so good. He added five to 10 seconds more. It's cool!"

While At the Gates were adjusting on the fly to harness happy accidents such as these, there were still some logistical challenges to making *The Nightmare of Being*. The pandemic definitely didn't help, resulting in the band rarely being in any one studio at the same time. Instead, La Rocque was tasked with tracking guitars and bass about 45 miles south of Gothenburg at Varberg, Sweden's Sonic Train Studio. Lindberg laid down vocals in Gothenburg's Welfare Sounds with Per Stålberg. In the case of Erlandsson, who resides in London, travel measures and pandemic-era safety protocols made it so that the drummer wasn't able to fly out to Stockholm's Studio Gröndal to record with engineer/mixer Jens Bogren until late November 2020. That he even made it out of England just then was a miracle in and of itself.

"It was between the second and the third wave of the pandemic," Björler says. "They eased off the lockdown thing in the UK, so he managed to get over [*in the fall*]. When he got back, they started to have a serious lockdown again. We were lucky to get

At the Gates bassist Jonas Björler on stage at Razzmatazz in Barcenlona, January 18, 2019

him over and do the drums."

Despite the scattered recording schedule, At the Gates' latest is confidently executed from start to finish. Fans clamoring for that classic At the Gates sound will get annihilated by speed-forward pieces like "The Paradox." "Touched by the White Hands of Death" likewise affixes a familiar triplet swing to the band's drilled-down riffs, but the song begins with a fanciful, if slightly frightening symphony of woodwinds, brass and bowed strings. While not orchestral in a traditional sense, Björler modeled the creepy, competing tremolo picking patterns that begin "The Abstract Enthroned" on the unsettling, spiraling sounds of 20th-century Soviet composer Dmitri Shostakovich.

"I was listening to a lot of Shostakovich, the Russian composer — he's out of the box, really dark stuff," the bassist says. "He has no mould; he progresses at a half a tone or semitone; doesn't follow any rules. I wanted to do something like that [*for the intro of "The Abstract Enthroned," but*] when it goes over to the thrashy verses, it picks up into a normal At the Gates kind of thing."

In terms of *Nightmare*'s other outside-the-box moments, the dissonant crunging of early King Crimson can be felt on "Garden of Cyprus," a prog-textured piece that finds Stålhammar employing an evocative and eerie, low-gain style to his brief lead section before making space for guest saxophonist Anders Gabrielsson to blow through a passionate solo of his own.

Even while Björler is At the Gates' principal songwriter, it's clear his bandmates and *The Nightmare of Being*'s many outside collaborators are nevertheless integral to the record's overall aesthetic. For another example, take "Cosmic Pessimism," perhaps the boldest pivot from At the Gates' traditionally savage, bpm-pushing death metal. The idea for the track had first come from vocalist Lindberg, after spinning some vintage Krautrock tunes for Björler. The bassist, meanwhile, felt he could take the overall feel of the genre's cosmic grooves in a more metal direction. "Inspiration comes from anything, so I am not turning any idea down... unless somebody in the band tells me it sucks," the bassist says with a laugh.

To wit, you can hear a bit of early Seventies motorik rhythm-making in the way Erlandsson locks into the track's tight and hypnotic mid-tempo groove. To the guitarists, though, the song's ultra-loose and unfurled, clean channel riffing conjures the stoniest moments of Kyuss; Björler thinks there's a bit of Thin Lizzy in there, too. As with much of the album, Larsson and Stålhammar tracked "Cosmic Pessimism" with their Solar ATG series baritone guitars, both men yielding an especially dense, bottom-heavy hum by toggling the alder-body instrument toward the top humbucker.

"For some of the rhythm parts we used the neck pickup for a smoother, bassier sound," Larsson says of "Cosmic Pessimism," adding, "Other than that, we used an Ibanez baritone for some parts, and we borrowed Andy's guitar with a true temperament fretboard for a melody part that kept sounding out of key. I never caught what brand of guitar it was, though."

Larsson and Stålhammar initially pushed their respective parts through an ENGL Powerball at Sonic Train, though everything was later re-amped through both a Diezel head and a vintage Mesa/Boogie Dual Rectifier going through Mesa oversized cabs with V30 speakers. Björler's bass tone is just as meaty throughout the 10-song collection. As he had on his early demos, Björler basically ran his Warwick Corvette Standard bass directly into Devin Townsend's Heavy Bass plug-in — though he suspects Bogren may have done some additional EQ'ing while mixing and mastering *The Nightmare of Being* at Örebro, Sweden's Fascination Street Studios.

Slaughter of the Soul is an unimpeachable death metal classic, but it's fair to say that At the Gates' early masterpiece also worked within a limited scope. It's wall-to-wall rippers by design, with the band having intentionally scaled down their arrangements back then to harness something spectacularly raw. As At the Gates move into their fourth decade of activity, though, they've fully mastered the balance between simple, brute force and elegiac metal complexity. Whereas *The Red in the Sky Is Ours* may have been ambitious but unstructured, the grand scale epic-ness that ebbs and flows through *Nightmare* is seamless. Though it showcases some of the band's wildest musical moments, Björler employed a simple method for making *The Nightmare of Being* a well-rounded, though cohesive experience: key changes. "Some songs are E, some songs are G♯. *Slaughter of the Soul* is only in B minor — it's almost boring," Björler says. "This record has everything."

Slaughter of the Soul could have preserved the band in amber — 26 years later, it's still a benchmark for melodic death metal — but three albums into the reunion phase, *The Nightmare of Being* finds the quintet addressing their legacy while pushing off into even more brutal horizons. Larsson anticipates how each album cycle seems to find Björler upping bandmates' games.

"There's always one riff on a new album that Jonas writes that pushes me. [*This time*] it's the ending to 'Touched by the White Hands of Death,' the really thrashy part," Larsson says. "I had to learn a new technique. I'm 90 percent there with the alternating triplets — it's too fast to start from the upstroke. For Anders, the old guitar player, that was his style. I never had a reason to learn that [*kind of technique back then*], but I do now. I appreciate that, though, getting pushed like that."

"Wait 'til you hear the new stuff," Björler quips ahead of a round of laughter from all three riffers.

A nightmare to learn, perhaps, but the band and their fans are no doubt sweetly dreaming of whatever At the Gates think up next. GW

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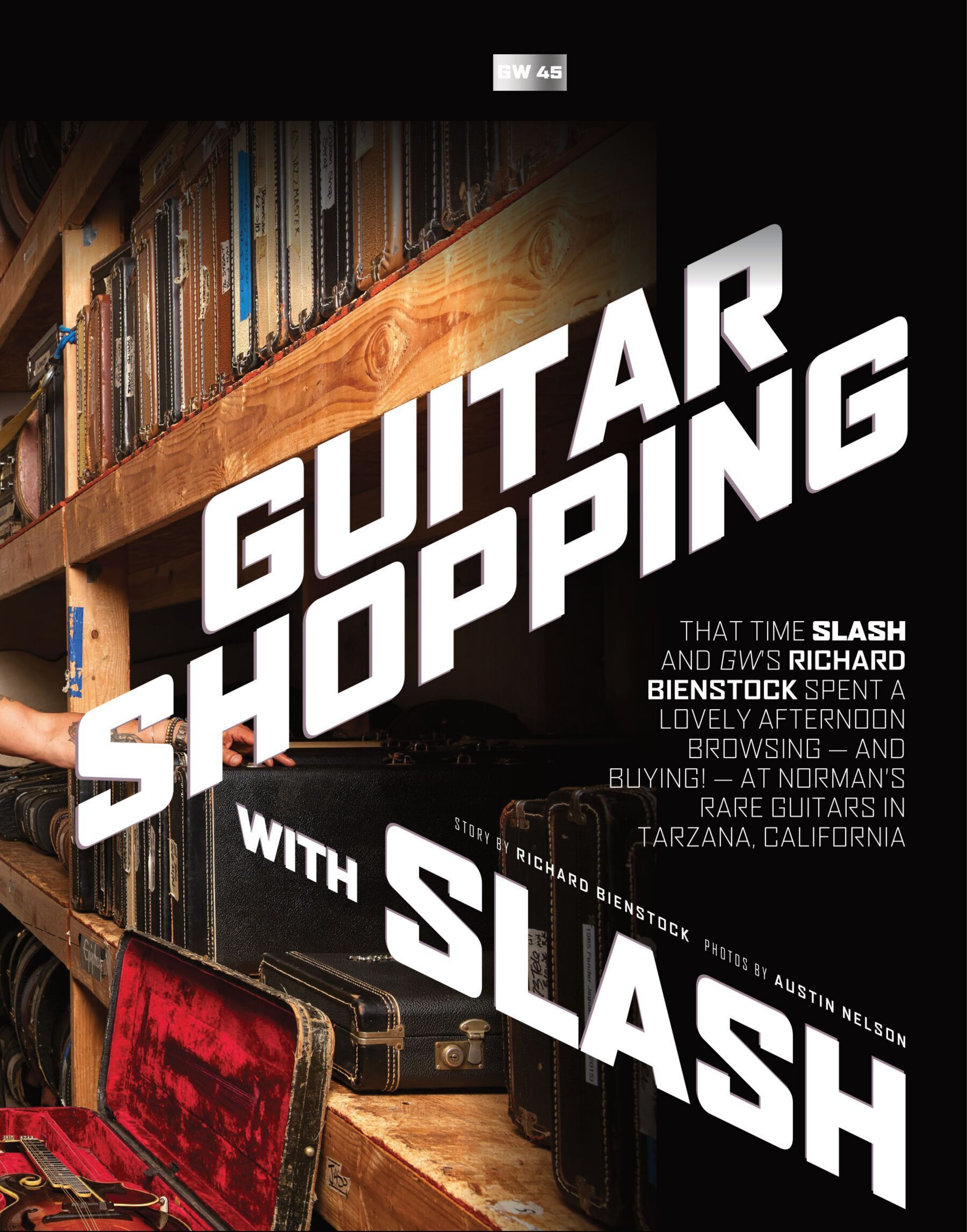
Slash — surrounded by possibilities — at Norman's Rare Guitars



GUITAR SHOPPING WITH SLASH

THAT TIME **SLASH** AND *GW*'S **RICHARD BIENSTOCK** SPENT A LOVELY AFTERNOON BROWSING — AND BUYING! — AT NORMAN'S RARE GUITARS IN TARZANA, CALIFORNIA

STORY BY **RICHARD BIENSTOCK** PHOTOS BY **AUSTIN NELSON**

"YOU GO IN LOOKING FOR ONE THING, AND THEN YOU SEE SOMETHING ELSE THAT YOU DON'T NECESSARILY NEED, BUT YOU HAVE TO HAVE IT"

[*clockwise from above*] Slash — at Norman's Rare Guitars — with a 1963 Gibson J-45; with Richard Bienstock (and a pair of Les Paul Standards); and with Norman Harris, owner of Norman's Rare Guitars

WALKING INTO NORMAN'S RARE GUITARS ON A SUNNY afternoon, Slash is a man on a mission. Specifically, that mission is to find a '59 Gibson Les Paul. And not just any '59 Gibson Les Paul. He's on the hunt for a tobacco burst — a rare and coveted finish on what is already a rare and coveted guitar model. "There's only two that I know of," Slash says.

One of the two, he used to own — it's the famous model he uses to rip the solo outside a church in Guns N' Roses' "November Rain" video. "But it was Joe [*Perry*]'s and I gave it back to him," he says.

Slash still has three 1959 examples in his possession — "One's basically a lemon burst, and the other two are faded cherry sunbursts," he says. But he calls the tobacco burst his favorite finish. "So I figured I should put the word out there. Because it's not going to just come walking up to my door."

Which is why Slash has come walking through Norman's door. Because if anybody in L.A. can find a rare guitar, it's Norman Harris, who has been dealing vintage instruments for more than 50 years, and whose Tarzana, California, shop is a go-to destination for artists, collectors and everyday guitar fans alike.

Harris, who greets Slash on this day, doesn't have a tobacco burst '59 on hand ("That's a tall order," he acknowledges), but he assures Slash he'll put some feelers out. In the meantime, he has plenty of other vintage beauties for us to look at.

As for Slash, he admits he's a guitarist who doesn't really frequent guitar stores. "They're overwhelming," he says. "It's like going to a restaurant where the menu's 30 pages long." That said, he's been friendly with Harris for decades, and when he wants to shop, Norman's is his spot. "I've known Norman for a long time, and he's got one of the most comprehensive guitar stores around," Slash says, then laughs. "I live in the vicinity, and when I moved here I thought, fuck, this is dangerous..."

And with that, we have a look around.

As Slash walks alongside the rows of premium new and vintage models, Harris points him toward a few choice items, including a rare Stromberg with a $40,000 price tag and a 1930s Larson Brothers Mauer, "one of the fanciest acoustics you'll see," Harris says. He also highlights a prototype of Epiphone's Joe Bonamassa 1958 "Amos" Korina Flying-V, which leads Slash to reminisce about the first Epiphone he ever owned, which he says was also his first "good" acoustic.

"It was a 1930s Epiphone dreadnought," he tells us. "When I was 15 I would do some babysitting, and at this one house they had it hanging on the wall next to a mandolin. I said to the parents, 'Can I play it when the kid's asleep?' I was still playing it when they came home, and they actually ended up giving it to me. And I still have it — the fucking tailpiece is coming out of the body, but it's hanging on."

Despite Slash's previous assertion that he's not much of a guitar-store fan, he has a rich history with them. "When I was 17 or 18 I used to work in one — Hollywood Music Store, on Fairfax and Melrose," he tells *Guitar World* as we walk the perimeter of Norman's. "It was owned by Hiro [*Misawa*], a Japanese businessman who I think had a music store in Tokyo and then came over to the States. If I remember correctly, it was the only authorized B.C. Rich dealer in town. And that was my first good electric guitar, a B.C. Rich Mockingbird that I got there. Before that, I think I bought an Explorer for a hundred bucks and I took it back and traded it for a Les Paul. But those were just copies."

There's one other piece of Slash history attached to the Hollywood Music Store — it's where he first met Izzy Stradlin. "Izzy came in one day because he had seen a drawing I had done of Aerosmith, and he was looking for the guy who made it," Slash recalls. "That was the first time we ever met. And then later on we hooked up and he played me his demo [*of pre-Guns N' Roses band Hollywood Rose*]. That was the first time I heard Axl."

As for whether he was a good employee?

"All things considered, yeah, I was," Slash says. "Although there's a 'commission salesman' mentality that was hard for me to wrap my head around. Like, 'If you sell this, you're going to get paid this percentage on it.' I remember one of the guys I used to work with, his name was Phil, he was an older guy and he had been a Guitar Center commissioned salesman. He came down to Hollywood Music Store and started working there, and he was great at it. He was from Texas, and he had this real cool kind of demeanor —

cowboy boots, plaid shirts, mustache..." Slash laughs. "He tried to show me the ropes. And I tried my damnedest to do a good job."

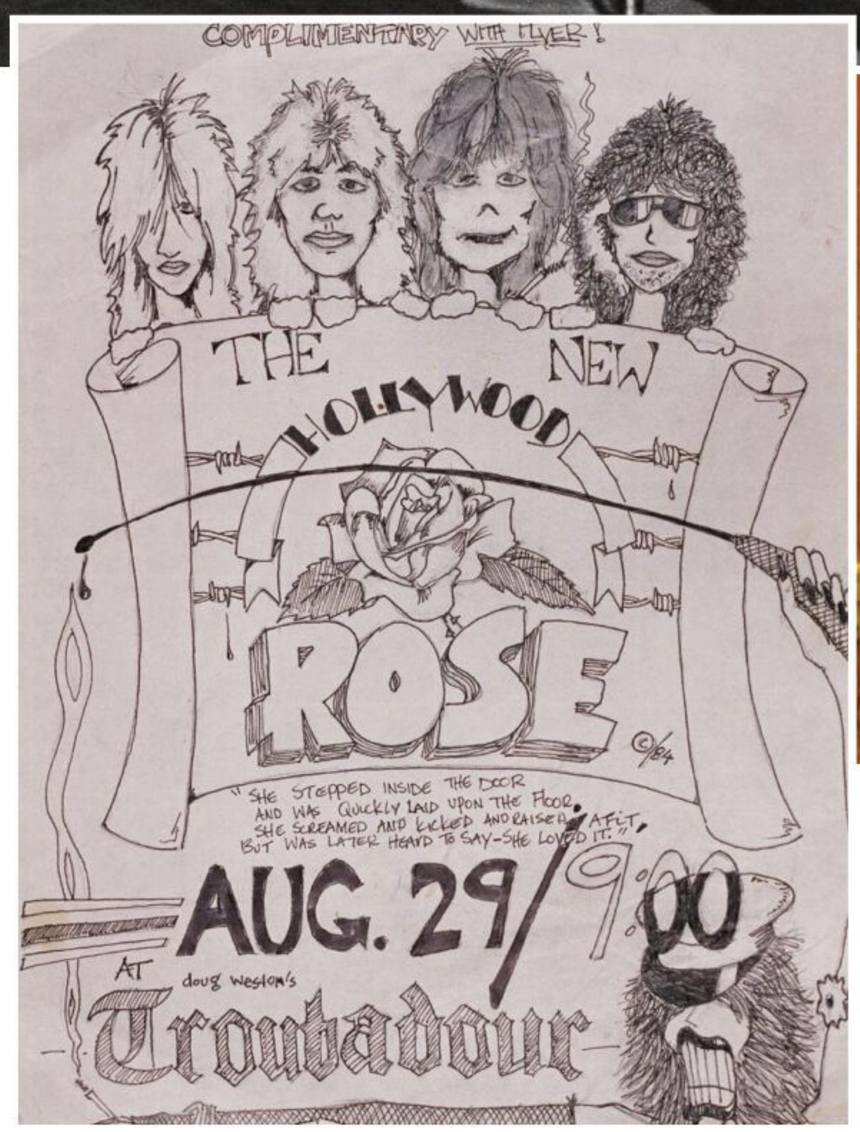
During his days at the store, Slash recalls, "all these guys used to come in while I'd be working, pick up guitars and play their latest Randy Rhoads stuff for two hours, just sitting on an amp. It was crazy. I was never that guy." Despite the fact that he regularly plays on some of the biggest stages in the world, and to tens of thousands of fans at a clip, he maintains that he's "never liked playing in front of people in a store. So when I did go to a store, I was always looking for something specific. Then I'd tinker with it for a second and put it down, because I felt very self-conscious if anybody else was there. I'm still like that."

And anyway, Slash continues, "I don't buy guitars just to have guitars. It has to be something I'll actually use. I do have a couple guitars that are outside of my normal thing that you're used to seeing me with, but I find that they only interest me for a second, because they sound like 'that.' Whatever it is they are, that's what they sound like. Which is not really what I'm going for. I'm trying to sound like me. So I end up not buying anything too crazy."

Of course, Slash is still, like all of us, a guitar lover. And that means that even if he tends to be specific about what it is he's looking for, he's also susceptible to making spur-of-the-moment purchases. "And that's why guitar stores can be dangerous," he says. "You go in looking for one thing, and then you see something else that you don't necessarily need, but you feel you have to have it... and you end up buying it."

Over the course of the pandemic, Slash popped into Norman's to purchase a few very particular items, including a '56 Les Paul Goldtop, some Fender Deluxe amps and a mid-Sixties six-string bass, "which is killer, and which I actually needed," he says. For his visit today Harris has pulled aside some choice instruments, and so we make our way beyond the store's showroom floor to a narrow, tightly packed corridor in the back to check them out.

"We call this room our 'secret stash,'

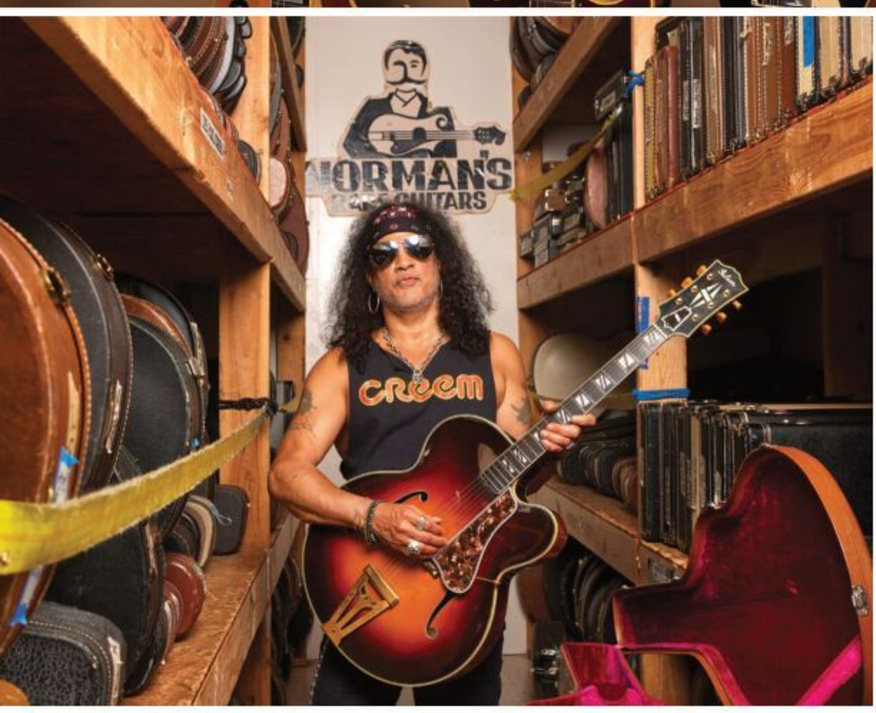


[*top*] Hollywood Rose at Madame Wong's East in Los Angeles, August 29, 1984: [*from left*] Steve Darrow, Axl Rose, Steven Adler and Slash, playing a B.C. Rich Warlock. [*above*] A 1984 Hollywood Rose gig flyer that Slash designed and drew

MARC S CANTER/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES (BOTH PHOTOS)

"I DON'T BUY GUITARS JUST TO HAVE GUITARS. IT HAS TO BE SOMETHING I'LL ACTUALLY USE"

Slash with Gibson Les Paul and [*below*] a 1941 Gibson Super 400P in the guitar-packed corners of Norman's Rare Guitars



Norman says. "It's for good friends of the store and people who know what this stuff is."

First up? A 1963 Gibson J-45 that Norman calls "pretty stunning." The acoustic, he says, "has been sitting in my warehouse, where I have maybe a few hundred guitars, for probably 25 years. It's hardly played, and it's about as good an example as you'll ever see." Slash picks up the instrument, rests it on his knee and spools out some chords and bluesy single-note lines before playing a series of arpeggios up the neck. A smile creeps across his face. "See?," he says. "Dangerous."

From there, Harris pulls out a pristine 1923 Gibson F-5 Lloyd Loar, which he calls the "sunburst Les Paul of mandolins."

"Some of these had a Virzi Tone Producer, which a lot of people don't like," Harris says. "This one is what they call a 'pre-Virzi.' So it's like the very top of the line when it comes to mandolins."

Finally, Harris eyes a row of black hard cases crammed on a high shelf and reaches up to pull out one case in particular. "Since we're talking Gibson, this is an L-4C from the Fifties," he says, opening the case to reveal a stunning blonde archtop. "It's got flatwounds on it and it's in almost-new condition. It's one of those guitars that's almost like a time machine."

The blonde finish, Harris continues, is especially choice. "The thing about blonde guitars is that they had to use the best wood for them, because if there were any imperfections in the wood, it would show. Whereas if it was, say, a sunburst finish, they could just fade around it. And that's why when guitars were priced, the blondes were always more. Because they couldn't use imperfect wood."

Harris returns the L-4C to its case and we head back out to the main showroom. But not before Slash comments, rather, um, dangerously, "I may want to check out that J-45 one more time..."

Given that we've already killed the better part of an afternoon at Norman's, it's about time to head out. But not before we make one more stop — the wall of Les Pauls, of course. We each grab a Standard — Slash a rich cherry sunburst, ours more a lemony hue — and spend a few minutes playing. Rest assured — no Randy Rhoads licks were attempted.

Afterwards, guitars are returned to the wall and Slash packs up to leave. At the front desk, however, there's something waiting for him — that 1963 Gibson J-45 from the "secret stash" room. Slash signs the invoice, puts the acoustic in its case and heads for the door. He turns around to give one final wave to Harris, and then makes his way into the L.A. afternoon sun, his newest Gibson companion by his side. GW

Artist: Chris Buck

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QUAD RAPHONIC

SLASH DETAILS THE MAKING OF **4**, HIS HIGH-ENERGY, LIVE-IN-A-LEGENDARY-NASHVILLE-STUDIO NEW ALBUM WITH **MYLES KENNEDY** AND THE CONSPIRATORS — AND FILLS US IN ON NEW **GUNS N' ROSES** MUSIC AND MORE

BY **RICHARD BIENSTOCK**
PHOTOS BY **AUSTIN NELSON**

"Even the solos are live," says Slash (shown here with a signature Gibson Les Paul) of *4*, the new SMKC album that was recorded at RCA Studio A ("that old Chet Atkins studio") in Nashville

"I'VE WANTED TO DO RECORDS LIKE THIS EVER SINCE WE FIRST STARTED – EVER SINCE GUNS N' ROSES FIRST STARTED"

"I got on the phone with [*4 producer Dave Cobb*], and we hit it off right away because we both love Glyn Johns," Slash says

WHEN *GUITAR WORLD* CATCHES UP WITH Slash one morning in late October 2021, it's just a few weeks after the guitarist has wrapped a successful two-month stint of U.S. stadiums and arenas with Guns N' Roses. And yet, here we are, discussing the imminent release of a new Slash featuring Myles Kennedy and the Conspirators album, as well as a just-announced tour with the band.

For some artists, this quick turnaround might engender a bit of musical whiplash. For Slash, it's just standard operating procedure. "I think I've gotten pretty used to sort of living in both worlds at the same time," he says, then laughs. "You have to, in order to be able to do it."

It also doesn't hurt that Slash genuinely loves to play guitar, in particular in a live situation. "When the feel is right and the energy is right and everything's firing on all cylinders, it's the fucking best," he acknowledges. Which is perhaps why, when it came time to record the new and fourth SMKC album — titled, aptly, *4* — he wanted to create as much of a live experience as possible.

Which meant changing things up from how Slash has made any previous Conspirators record (and, to go one further, how most bands make most records in general). "I've wanted to do records like this ever since we first started," he says. "Ever since Guns N' Roses first started. It's just, I could never get a producer to actually do it."

That "it" involved packing the entire SMKC band (which, in addition to Slash, includes singer Myles Kennedy, bassist Todd Kerns, drummer Brent Fitz and rhythm guitarist Frank Sidoris) along with all the guitars, amps, drums and the rest of the gear, into one room — in this case, Nashville's historic RCA Studio A, with producer Dave Cobb — hitting the record button and blasting through a set of high-energy, hard-driving, riff-roaring rock 'n' roll tunes.

How did it go? The results speak for themselves. From the insistent churn of the opening track and first single, "The River Is Rising," to the slippery funk rhythms of "April Fool," the dinosaur-sized stomp of "Whatever Gets You By" to the off-to-the-races sprint of "Call Off the Dogs," *4* hits with the immediacy and impact of, well, a great live show, where the band is locked in tight as a unit, the energy is peaking and the volume is cranked to ear-shattering levels.

But it's not all full-speed-ahead on the record. Slash & Co. color outside the lines on tracks like the slinky, Eastern-tinged "Spirit Love" and the uncharacteristically major-key pop-rock workout "Fill My World," as well as the widescreen, epic ballad, "Fall Back to Earth," which closes the record in dramatic fashion. Overall, it's a leaner, harder and more expansive take on the SMKC sound (the band's approach to recording isn't the only thing that's different — *4* is also the first release on the newly formed Gibson Records label). And it's captured in a way that, Slash says, "knowing now that I can do it, I definitely look forward to doing it again."

Which isn't to say that making *4* didn't come without its challenges — Covid being one of them. In an exclusive talk with *Guitar World* — Slash's first major interview about the album — the guitar great tells us how it all went down.

You opted to go for a more "live" approach on *4*. How was the overall experience for you?

It was great for me because I've always thought, I don't understand why it's impossible to do a live record with live guitars and everybody in the same room. And now I've found that it is possible to do, and I'll probably strive to do the next one the same way.

But all things considered, I have to give credit where credit's due: the studio that we did it in, which is the RCA Studio A, that old Chet Atkins studio, that room is one of the only rooms you could actually get away with doing something like that, just because of the way it's set up. Even Dave Cobb will tell you that. A lot of these rooms don't lend themselves to that. It's just not really possible. The bleed would be too much. So a lot of it has to do with this particular room.

Also, Dave had tons of really great analog gear in the studio, and we used all of it. So it's one of those records that's got a really pure kind of old-school sound. And not because we were trying to be old-school or trying to be retro — it's just that, tonally, all that analog gear tends to sound really good. So this worked for us, but in each case it depends on your situation. If you go into the studio and you're making the material up on the spot, maybe doing the whole thing live doesn't necessarily work, because you're still learning the material. But if you can do the whole record with everybody playing live, and you're forced to be able to perform in the moment and try not to fuck it up, [*Laughs*] I think that's the best way to do it.

Dave Cobb is known for producing artists like Chris Stapleton, Sturgill Simpson and Brandi Carlile. How did you wind up working with him on *4*?

Well, Elvis [*producer Michael "Elvis" Baskette*] who's done our last two records, has been doing so much stuff with Myles otherwise [*Baskette is the longtime producer for the Kennedy-fronted Alter Bridge, and also helmed Kennedy's 2021 solo effort,* The Ides of March] that I thought we should probably find somebody else this time. Because at the end of the day the vocals are the most important thing on the record, and I didn't want to have Myles spread so thin on so many different records and sounding the same. It was nothing against Elvis — Elvis is amazing. I just wanted a different approach, a fresh approach. So I'm going, "What producers are around that sort of fit the bill for this kind of a record?" And at that time, I wasn't talking about a live record, I was just talking about a rock 'n' roll record. I was given a list of a very short list of names, and Dave Cobb was on that list. So I got on the phone with him, and we hit it off right away because we both love Glyn Johns [*the famed producer and engineer who has worked with the Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin, the Beatles, Faces, Humble Pie and many others*], and we love the sort of spontaneous, sort of live vibe of his records. And also the way it sounds like everybody is just playing off of each other. That's always been such a big thing for me. So that was the key moment in the conversation that made me think, yeah, I want to work with this guy...

Once you got into the studio with Dave, how quickly did the recording sessions move?
We did all 10 songs in five days. And I say that meaning, from the first day forward. Two songs on the first day, two songs the second day, like that.

It was basically drums, bass and rhythm guitars being cut together?
Drums, bass, rhythm guitars, lead guitars and vocals. So even the solos are live. The only overdubs, really, are the harmonies, and maybe some riff doubles and things like that. But everything else was just recorded in the moment. It's weird to even imagine, because people just don't do that anymore.

Did working in that way affect how you approached your solos?
Probably. I mean, in general, when I did the demos, the first solo that I played the first time I recorded a demo was always the best one. And I tended to stick with that idea. So when we cut it live in the studio I would have a basic idea because of that demo. But then because of the way we were doing things it was all very much flying by the seat of your pants. There's really not what you would call any totally "set" notes, except for maybe the first note of the solo, or the idea about where the melody is supposed to go. But there's a range. On a song like "Fill My World," that's a pretty melodic solo, and what you hear is what was the basic idea of the first take of the first demo. And then "April Fool," I sort of had an idea about what that was going to be, and when we were rehearsing and playing it over and over again I just started to fall into a pattern. "The Path Less Followed" was similar, but then the solo that came out on the record was completely different from what I originally planned on doing. And then songs like "Spirit Love," "Call Off the Dogs," "Actions Speak Louder Than Words" and "C'est La Vie," those are all really sort of off-the-cuff improv.

You mentioned that "Fill My World" has a very melodic solo. It's also just a very melodic song overall — much poppier in approach than what we're used to hearing for the Conspirators. Where did that idea come from?
I just made up the riff and the chord progression sort of followed. It came together really quickly. It wasn't a complicated song to write. At the same time, because of the nature of it, I was actually a little apprehensive about sending it to the guys. I think I sent it to Myles before I sent it to anybody else, and he put a really great vocal melody on it. And I said, "You know what? Let's just go with it and not worry about what anybody might think." But it turned out really great.

Another standout track on the record is "Spirit Love," which features an electric sitar. What led you to pull that instrument out?
When I originally wrote the music I was playing that part on guitar. But at some point in pre-production I had the idea for the sitar. I usually stay away from sitars because they can be really cliché, but for this particular thing, I thought, you know, it might actually be pretty cool... And so I played the part on guitar when I recorded the song, and then I overdubbed the sitar and it worked. I just played it through the Marshall, the same way the Marshall was set up for guitar.

When it came to writing these songs, did quarantining and social distancing have an effect on the way the material came together? Were you working in a more solitary manner than usual?
I guess I was inclined to spend more time focusing on the demos this time around, because I couldn't get everybody in to just jam. Like, I did keyboard drums for all the demos. But I did have Todd [*Kerns*] fly in from Vegas and put and put bass on, rather than me doing the bass. So all things considered, it really wasn't that much of a difference. I just think it was a little bit more laid back as far as the whole leadup to pre-production was concerned. But usually, yeah, we just get into a room together, we work out some stuff and we just start jamming it out. This time around, it was a bit more about getting the songs prepped and sending them over and that kind of thing. And then we all took a tour bus together to the studio...

You guys drove a tour bus to Nashville to begin recording?
Well, a tour bus seemed like the safest way to travel across the country, as opposed to any kind of commercial flying possibilities. And I definitely wasn't going to rent a private plane. [*Laughs*] So I figured, "Okay, with a tour bus we can all stay insulated and just get there." So that's what we did. And we tested before we went, everybody tested negative, and we were off.

Myles has since said he actually contracted Covid during the recording process.
Yeah, most of us did. I think what happened was, the bus picked me up at my house in L.A. and then I took the bus to Vegas and met the other guys. Myles drove from Washington to Vegas, and he thinks he contracted it at a rest stop along the way. But the viral load hadn't peaked when he did the test so it didn't show up. And you know, looking back on it, on the bus ride to Nashville, Todd and Brent and Myles and Frank spent most of that drive just hanging out in the back lounge together. And so eventually Brent and Todd picked it up, too. How Frank got by on this whole fucking project without catching it is beyond me.

And after that, you were all staying at a house together in Nashville.
Well, that's definitely how I got it. This was already 2021, so everybody had been vaccinated. And even though we quarantined and sort of followed those protocols, we still shared the same kitchen, you know? I remember the day Myles told me he caught it, and then the other guys got tested and they had it. I was like, "Man, I should probably check into a hotel..." [*Laughs*] But then I was like, "I'm not going to abandon my band, so let's just try and be as cautious as possible." And we did. But it just didn't pan out.

I think the lesson in there is that it's always the singer that messes everything up.
[*Laughs*] Well, I have to say, I'm glad it was Myles and not somebody else. Because you

[*from left*] Brent Fitz (drums), Myles Kennedy (vocals), Slash, Todd Kerns (bass) and Frank Sidoris (guitar)

"IT'S ALWAYS THAT HUMAN 'MORTALITY' THAT MAKES ROCK 'N' ROLL SOUND GOOD. YOU KNOW, THOSE LITTLE CRACKS IN THE VENEER"

know, Myles is a little bit of a germaphobe. I think that had it been Todd or myself that caught it first, the course of the record might have changed a little bit. And also, Myles, when he was tracking the vocals — we did five days of tracking and he sang the songs — he had it and obviously just didn't know it yet. If he had known, there's no way he would've sang.

Myles has said that when he listens to *4*, he can hear himself getting sick in some of the songs, in particular "The River Is Rising," which was one of the last ones cut for the record.

That's what he says. And I mean, he would know. Personally, I think he sounds great. But I think it's always that human "mortality" that makes rock 'n' roll sound good. You know, those little cracks in the veneer.

What was your overall gear setup this time?

I had a couple of [*Marshall*] Jubilee heads at my own studio, and there was one in particular that I had been doing demos on. So I just used that and also brought a backup. And I brought a Slash model [*Marshall*] head, which I ended up never using. I think that was basically it. As for guitars, I brought my Derrig Les Paul [*copy*], which I used for most stuff, but I also had two [*Gibson Les Paul*] '59 reissues that sound really good, and I know I used one of them on "The Path Less Followed," and I used another one on "April Fool." Then for "Call Off the Dogs" I used a black Gibson Les Paul Custom '68 reissue. Actually, it was a two-pickup model, so maybe it was a '70 or '72 reissue. And for "Fill My World" I used one of the brand-new Slash Les Paul Goldtops. But maybe the biggest difference for me was that I played a [*Gibson*] Flying V, like a '69 or '68 reissue. I got it for Christmas and it just sounds really great. I used that for "C'est

Slash with fellow SMKC guitarist (and Les Paul fan) Frank Sidoris — "How Frank got by on this whole project without catching [*Covid*] is beyond me," Slash says

"YEAH, YEAH. THERE'S DEFINITELY MORE [GUNS N' ROSES] STUFF COMING"

La Vie" and "Actions Speak Louder Than Words," and you can tell it's a different guitar because the tone is cleaner than on the other songs.

And you know what else is funny? I didn't play any acoustic on the record, and all the electric guitars, there's no rhythm pickup, which for me is unusual. But it was just that every time I switched to the rhythm pickup it sounded too obvious. So I never used it.

How about pedals?
There's not too many. I had my gain pedal, which is an MXR that I've been using pretty much forever at this point. And then I had a [*MXR*] Phase 45 that I used for "Actions Speak Louder Than Words," a Dunlop voice box for "C'est La Vie" and a Rotovibe type of deal for the verses in "Fall Back to Earth." But that's about it.

Guns N' Roses recently released two new songs — "Absurd" and "Hard Skool" — your first with the band since the Nineties. Did you use a similar setup to record your parts on those songs?
I used different amps. I mean, they're the same amps — Jubilees — but different ones than the ones I used for my record. I think they were older ones. And I used the Derrig for those songs, too. Pretty much everything on the new Guns stuff is just the one guitar and the one amp.

As far as using the Derrig Les Paul on the Guns songs, was that done to make a connection with the earlier Guns material?
Not really. It's just always been my go-to recording guitar. It's familiar. I know what it does. I know its personality and it's just something I know I'm not experimenting with. And so I always use it. I don't think there's ever been a session with one of the bands that I'm actually in where I haven't had it with me.

"Absurd" and "Hard Skool" were both worked up from older Guns N' Roses songs. But now that we've had a taste of music from the current band, would it be safe to say that we should prepare ourselves for new Guns tracks?
Yeah, yeah. There's definitely more stuff coming.

When? At some far-off time in the future?
Ahh... [*Laughs*] Sooner than later, actually. [*Editor's note: In an interview with our sister magazine,* Classic Rock, *Slash added the following details: "There's new Guns material coming out as we speak, and we'll probably keep putting it out until the entire record's worth of stuff is done and then put it out solid. It's cool. I'm enjoying working on the stuff and having a good time doing it."*]

Clearly, you're in a creatively fertile moment with the Conspirators, and it's looking that way for Guns N' Roses as well. As a musician playing riff-based rock 'n' roll in 2021 and 2022, how do you continue to keep it fresh and exciting for you and for the audience?
Well, I mean, exciting for the audience is really secondary. The most important thing is keeping it exciting for you, because the audience is not going to dig it if you don't dig it. And rock 'n' roll, there's nothing that comes close to it, in my opinion, for something that's hard-hitting and fucking moves and is fun and has attitude and all that shit. It's just a matter of doing it right.

And you know, a lot of people do it and have no clue why they're doing it, or what it's about or what it's supposed to feel like. It doesn't move them. I don't think they know that they're supposed to be moved, you know? But I also see a lot of people who really get it and play it because it comes from the heart and they feel it and it has a thing. Then it's something that you want to do. It's like sex, you know? You want to do it all day long, every day. [*Laughs*] So that's what keeps me doing it and keeps me inspired and looking for new ideas. It's sort of a never-ending quest. GW

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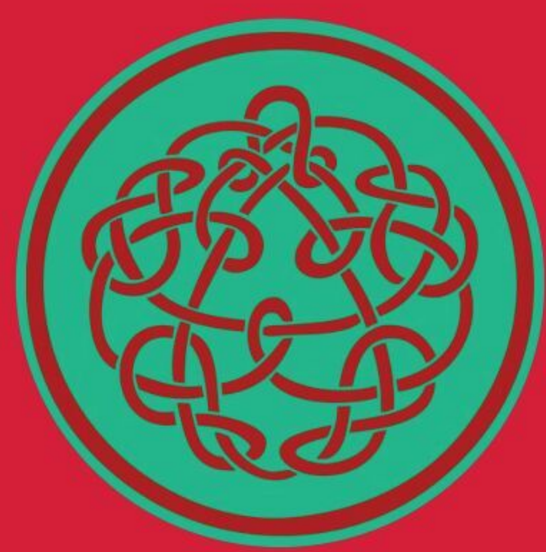
Robert Fripp performs with King Crimson in London in 1971



discipline

Robert Fripp's 20 greatest guitar moments

BY **RYAN REED** ● PHOTOS BY **GETTY IMAGES**

ROBERT FRIPP IS widely hailed as the king of progressive rock guitar — but he squirms visibly under that crown. In 2014, asked by *Classic Rock* if he's always taken issue with King Crimson's "prog" label, he made his feelings blatantly clear: "Yes, it's a prison," he said. "If you walk on stage and you're playing music, fine. But if you're walking on stage and you're playing progressive rock — death."

In a way, that discomfort makes sense. As King Crimson's key guiding force — and lone consistent member — since their debut LP, 1969's *In the Court of the Crimson King*, Fripp has typically veered away from popular tropes and trends. Across 13 studio albums (along with a smattering of EPs and live records), he's evolved from the band's early pseudo-symphonic style to infuse the avant-garde, classical, borderline jazz-fusion, free improvisation, heavy metal, New Wave, industrial and multi-drummer mayhem. No style has ever been off limits, and every Crimson era is an island unto itself.

You can attribute much of that range to Fripp's vision as a bandleader: No other rock musician is more willing to call it quits, embark on an extended hiatus and start from scratch with a new lineup. (And few have recruited so well for a particular artistic aim; it's hard to imagine King Crimson's sleeker Eighties revamp without the two American recruits, singer-guitarist Adrian Belew and bassist Tony Levin.) After all, Crimson have never been a guitar-first band — it's almost always been about ensemble composition, using the unique tools of the musicians in his company.

"If you listen to King Crimson's records, you realize the guitar playing has always been one of the smallest things that the band does," Fripp told *Guitar Player* in 1974. "One of the reasons for that is I've always been more happy in developing the other musicians; developing them as players."

King Crimson in 1981; [*from left*] Tony Levin, Adrian Belew, Bill Bruford and Robert Fripp

Democratic function aside, a great deal of Crimson's endurance does boil down to Fripp's creativity and prowess on guitar. He started playing at 11, learning on a right-handed instrument, despite being left-handed — and in a way, that was a bit of foreshadowing. He's always been keen to experiment, to approach the guitar from an unlikely vantage point: devising an overlapping playing system with Belew in the Eighties, utilizing unconventional harmonies and rhythms, creating the tape delay technique known as "Frippertronics," inventing New Standard Tuning (C/G/D/A/E/G), which he teaches students at his Guitar Craft courses.

And Fripp's non-Crimson resumé is equally versatile. As a guest player (and occasional producer), he's worked with art-rock giants (Peter Gabriel, Talking Heads), bona-fide pop stars (Daryl Hall, Blondie), prog bands (Van Der Graaf Generator, Matching Mole) and folk acts (the Roches) — not to mention his slightly under-the-radar solo projects and innovative collaborations with Brian Eno.

It would be impossible to fully survey the breadth of Fripp's style in one semi-concise list. But in a modest attempt to highlight the imagination and influence of his guitar playing, we've selected 20 essential, career-spanning moments — from Frippertronic soundscapes to metallic riffs, from arpeggiated acoustic reveries to feedback fireworks.

20. "Sky"

Robert Fripp, from 1996's *Radiophonics (1995 Soundscapes Volume 1 - Live in Argentina)*

It's fair to say Fripp diehards are an open-minded bunch, but many faithful found their patience tested with the guitarist's *Soundscapes* series, which ranges from atonal ambience to peaceful meditations like "Sky." The track, the final movement from his live "Buenos Aires Suite," is masterfully constructed, each sliver of tone bleeding in a color, like sun pouring in through a stained-glass window. By the piece's end, you've lost all sense of timing and chord sequence, just allowing yourself to soar through the kaleidoscope.

19. "The Zero of the Signified"

Robert Fripp, from 1980's *God Save the Queen/Under Heavy Manners*

Fripp continued to refine his Frippertronic experiments on his second solo LP — and he pushes hardest on its funkier second side, *Under Heavy Manners*, combining layered guitar textures and driving, four-on-the-floor rhythm sections into a style he dubbed "Discotronics." At just under 13 minutes, closer "The Zero of the Dignified" isn't exactly an easy listen — the ever-repeating lead guitar lick, a six-note motif similar to the cyclical pattern on King Crimson's "Frame by Frame," is a catalyst for hypnosis or anxiety, depending on one's mood. But the entire guitar arrangement is subtly, almost subconsciously, cinematic, as those industrial-tinged loops zoom past like menacing storm clouds.

18. "I Advance Masked"

Andy Summers & Robert Fripp, from 1982's *I Advance Masked*

It may seem like an unlikely pairing on paper, but Fripp and Police guitarist Andy Summers found a fascinating stylistic middle ground on *I Advance Masked*, the first of the pair's two collaborative LPs. The centerpiece is the opening title track, contrasting Summers' chiming *Synchronicity*-era tones with Fripp's dizzying chromatic runs over a muted kick drum pulse. "I would say the *I Advance Masked* album," Fripp told *Guitar Player* in 1986, "was a matter of research and development and arts and crafts, and of professional musicians working honorably." No doubt about that. It's familiar territory for both of them, but

the record occupies its own unique little corner in both of their catalogs.

17. "Upon This Earth"

David Sylvian, from 1986's *Gone to Earth*

Fripp found a simpatico collaborator in David Sylvian, former frontman of art-pop band Japan; they worked together on multiple tours and even recorded a 1993 LP, *The First Day*, billed under both of their names. But Fripp also added some reliably evocative guitar to Sylvian's sprawling double-LP *Gone to Earth*, including an array of atmospheric tones on "Upon This Earth." Over a reverb-smothered two-chord pattern of slide guitar and piano, the Crimson leader squeaks out some pristine birdsong that elevates the track into the stratosphere.

16. "Hammond Song"

The Roches, from 1979's *The Roches*

Fripp was wildly prolific during the break between King Crimson's 1974 disbandment and 1981 reinvention: recording solo work, making plenty of studio cameos, producing a handful of classic records. In one of his oft-forgotten collaborations, he helmed *The Roches*, the American folk-rock trio's self-titled debut — a project that arose after Fripp saw the group perform in New York and, impressed by what he saw, volunteered his services. His instrumental touch is minimal throughout the album, mostly relegated to occasional ambiance. But one standout contribution, the breathtaking guitar break on "Hammond Song," is a highlight from the entire pre/post-Crimson era. His understated solo, a series of snaking patterns and sustained tones (cutely credited here as "Fripperies"), brings a glimpse of the ethereal to an otherwise earthly ballad. (Bonus factoid: Levin, the guitarist's future bandmate, also appears on *The Roches*, giving King Crimson diehards another reason to seek this one out.)

15. "Heroes"

David Bowie, from 1977's *Heroes*

It could be Bowie's crowning achievement, but "Heroes" wouldn't reach such lofty heights without Fripp's subtle, yet essential, guitar work. Compared to the ornate Frippertronics or rapid-fire picking that define much of his catalog, the two-note phrase at this song's core might seem pedestrian by comparison. But it's hard to imagine a guitarist drawing out more emotion from those two notes — sustained bursts of tone that are essentially as famous as Bowie's own vocal melody. And it's not like Fripp just tossed off his cameo; as producer Tony Visconti told *Sound on Sound*, he used a "fine science" to craft his part, measuring the distance between his guitar and the speaker to create a perfect feedback for each note he played.

EBET ROBERTS/GETTY IMAGES

14. "Sartori in Tangier"

King Crimson, from 1982's *Beat*

Of King Crimson's early Eighties trilogy, *Beat* is often the most overlooked — arriving after the bold New Wave-prog evolution of *Discipline*, this album was naturally a little less radical. But the band continued to experiment with fascinating results: Take, for example, the instrumental "Sartori in Tangier," in which Fripp's violin-like leads pirouette over the hypnotically funky groove built on Levin's thumping Chapman Stick and Bill Bruford's clacking percussion. It sounds like no other Crimson song — or really any other song, period. "The music was very stage-friendly," Bruford told the DGM site. "[*I*]t had its own internal musical drama which worked well in that environment and it was a complete groove to play live. Nightly I could look forward to Robert's solo at the end of [*'Sartori in Tangier'*]."

13. "Evening Star"

Fripp & Eno, from 1975's *Evening Star*

On their second collaborative project, Fripp and Eno saved their most experimental tendencies for the six-part, 28-minute closer "An Index of Metals." But side one is soothing and placid, particularly on the twinkling title track: Fripp's sustained leads bob calmly amid the waves of clean strumming and pinging harmonics, occasionally joined by Eno's synths. It's an atmosphere as serene as the misty mountain-like landscape on the album cover.

12. "Baby's on Fire"

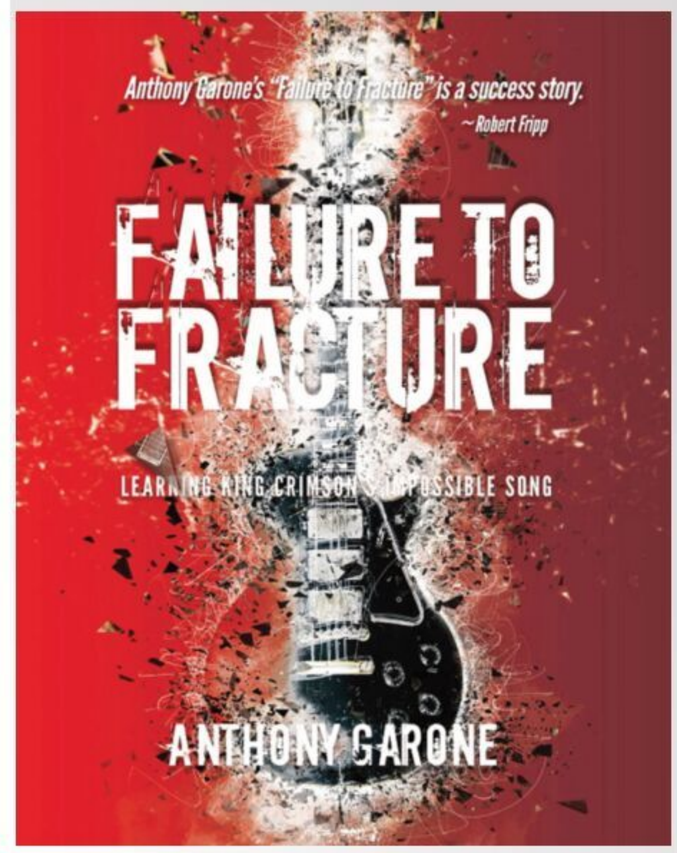
Brian Eno, from 1974's *Here Come the Warm Jets*

Brian Eno ratchets up the tension throughout this warped glam-pop oddity, singing bratty lines over a tick-tock hi-hat and out-of-tune, two-chord pulse that slowly worms its way under your skin. It's unsettling and somewhat hilarious, but the song achieves classic status only through Fripp's contribution: He goes wild as the piece grinds on, sparking off some of his most conventionally bluesy and metallic playing, adding feedback and seasick bent notes to the recipe.

11. "Swastika Girls II"

Fripp & Eno, from 1973's *(No Pussyfooting)*

"Swastika Girls II" is like the evil cousin of "The Heavenly Music Corporation," closing out *(No Pussyfooting)*, Fripp's debut collaboration with ambient master Eno, with a transcendental swath of VSC-3



Fracture Stress

Anthony Garone on his new book, *Failure to Fracture: Learning King Crimson's Impossible Song*

GIVEN THAT ANTHONY Garone wrote an entire book dedicated to mastering King Crimson's 1974 epic "Fracture," one of the most notoriously difficult guitar pieces in all of prog-rock, you'd think he'd have a mind-blowing story of hearing that string-skipping behemoth for the first time. But as a 16-year-old with an insatiable appetite for riffs, he initially considered it just another musical meal: "I didn't think about 'Fracture' as a song," he tells *Guitar World*. "I thought, 'This is food for a guitarist.' It was calories in, calories out. I remember I had a Sony Discman, and I put it on. I didn't even listen to the song. I paused it every few seconds and played the notes that I heard. It was such an arrogant and youthful folly thing to do. That's how I approached it, like puzzle pieces that were almost meaningless to me. 'Fracture'

synthesizer, clean picking and laser-beam leads. The guitarist's showpiece solo, laid out over the duo's signature tape loops, is both evocative and discordant, occasionally adopting an Eastern feel. Radical stuff — and it apparently arose in the magic of the moment: "Brian set up the looping in the control booth," he wrote in his *DGM Live* diary, "and, after five minutes of listening to the looping playing in to the multi-track, I walked into the studio, strapped on [*and*] wailed out."

10. "Breathless"

Robert Fripp, from 1979's *Exposure*

"Breathless" is a lost classic in the Fripp *oeuvre*, a stylistic hybrid between the metallic crunch of King Crimson's "Red," the textural soundscapes of his Eno collaborations and the sort of New Wave-leaning sleekness he'd perfect with Crimson's Eighties lineup in just a couple years. Few of his riffs punch with such heavyweight force, ascending the scale over the funky, bombastic rhythm section of drummer Narada Michael Walden and bassist/future bandmate Levin. Fripp is clearly fond of the tune, having revived it onstage in 2017 with Crimson's triple-drummer lineup.

9. "Exiles"

King Crimson, from 1973's *Larks' Tongues in Aspic*

This starlit ballad is one of the few Seventies Crimson tunes not dominated by Fripp's electric guitar. But that's precisely what makes it such a balanced tune, allowing plenty of space for Mellotron, John Wetton's melodic bass and almost-too-high-for-his-range belting, David Cross' violin and Bruford's minimalist drumming. Fripp mostly sticks to the acoustic, a rarity for this era — and his sublime arpeggios add a sense of poignancy that fits the track. Of course, he also squeezes in a tasteful electric solo at the end — the icing on this multi-layered cake.

8. "Starless"

King Crimson, from 1974's *Red*

Red's 12-minute closing epic fell dangerously close to the cutting room floor — according to Wetton, Fripp and Bruford weren't impressed with the initial version presented during rehearsal for 1974's *Starless and Bible Black*. (A meandering instrumental essentially took that song's place on the record.) But after some expanding the sax-laced ballad with some new, menacing sections and workshopping the tune onstage, "Starless" wound up as a classic in the Crim *oeuvre*. Fripp covers a wide stylistic range here: tackling the haunting main theme, ratcheting up the tension midway through with a series of one-note phrases in two-string bundles, adding some jarring riffs that sound like error messages from malfunctioning robots.

7. "The Night Watch"

King Crimson, from 1974's *Starless and Bible Black*

It's a lost Crimson masterpiece, arriving midway through one of the band's strangest and most misunderstood albums, *Starless and Bible Black*. Much of that project was built on improvised live recordings that were later tweaked and augmented in the studio — and as such, long stretches of its runtime are challenging to traditional prog fans, defined by loose instrumental explorations more than conventional riffs and choruses. But "The Night Watch" is an exception to that meandering vibe — a showcase for King Crimson's melodic side and wide band dynamics. Cross' weepy violin and Wetton's melancholy vocal grab you immediately, but Fripp is the MVP: He opens with frenzied tremolo strumming that dissolves into gorgeous harmonics and sweeping, vibrato-heavy leads.

6. "21st Century Schizoid Man"

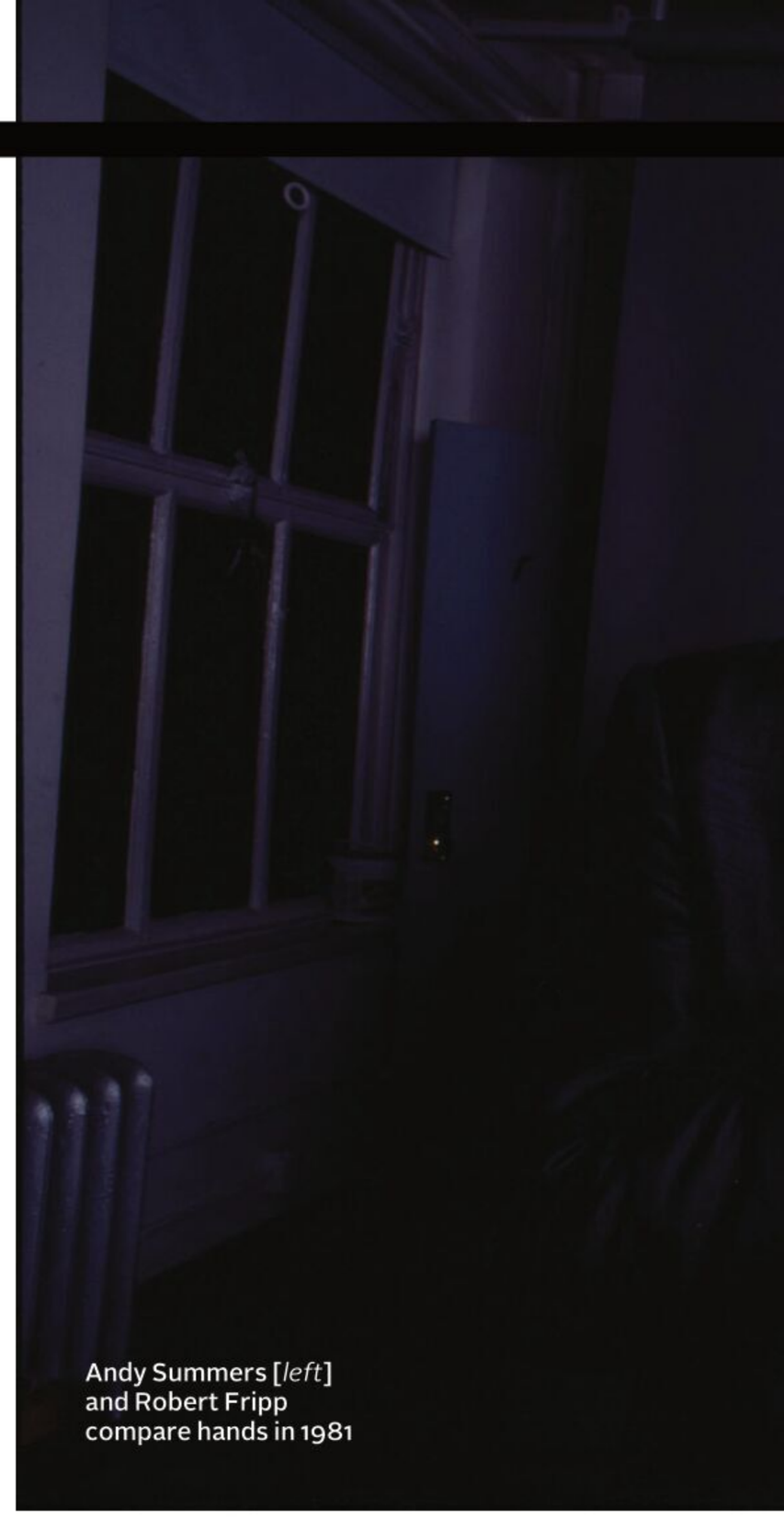
King Crimson, from 1969's *In the Court of the Crimson King*

Robert Fripp's legend was born with "21st Century Schizoid Man," the iconic opening track from King Crimson's debut LP. Of course, the strength lies in the full-band attack — from Michael Giles' spasmodic drum fills to Ian McDonald's menacing saxophones to Greg Lake's throat-ripping vocal to Peter Sinfield's war-torn lyric. "For me, it was group writing," Fripp told *Rolling Stone* in 2019. "And it wouldn't have been possible without those five young men." But Fripp's guitar is certainly on fire here, whether it's firing off chunky chords, screaming in unison with Lake's opening bass riff or gliding through the jazzy section with fuzzy leads and palm-muted melodies.

5. "St. Elmo's Fire"

Eno, from 1975's *Another Green World*

Few musicians think more conceptually about sound than Eno. Legend has it that, while recording this oceanic art-pop tune, he challenged Fripp to channel the sound of a Wimshurst machine, the electrostatic generator created in the late 1800s. Whether or not he succeeded in that task is irrelevant: Eno's unique request prompted one of the guitarist's most thunderous, violently aggressive solos — a torrential downpour of notes that balances out the song's overall sweetness. (On the final LP sleeve, he was credited with "Wimshurst guitar.")



Andy Summers [*left*] and Robert Fripp compare hands in 1981

4. "Level Five"

King Crimson, from 2003's *The Power to Believe*

By 2003, Fripp and Belew had crystallized a distinctive guitar symmetry, a sort of sonic telepathy refined through years of rehearsal and performance. King Crimson's 13th LP, *The Power to Believe*, featured many of their signature moves, including a more aggressive, textured take on the interlocking style they'd perfected in the early Eighties. And "Level Five" is the pinnacle of their work in this more metallic arena: Check out how they harmonize in the first verse and enter into a lockstep back and forth over Pat Mastelotto's glitchy electronic percussion, followed by chunky call-and-response riffs and ascending shredding.

3. "Larks' Tongues in Aspic, Part Two"

King Crimson, from 1973's *Larks' Tongues in Aspic*

"The question I posed myself might be put like this: 'What would Hendrix sound like playing the ROS or a Bartok string quartet?'" Fripp wrote in his online diary in 2001. It's an audacious query — and it resulted in one of King Crimson's most distinctive

LYNN GOLDSMITH/CORBIS/VCG VIA GETTY IMAGES

achievements: the two-part piece that bookends the band's fifth LP. The second half is the heart-stopper: Fripp piles up sheets of distortion that rise and fall in intensity, his instrument often interwoven with Cross' violin and Wetton's bass to create a snarling monster of strings. "If an older man might look back at this and be struck by that young man's arrogance," Fripp wrote, "well, an ignorance of limitations sometimes allows the young of any age to achieve impossible things!"

2. "Frame by Frame"

King Crimson, from 1981's *Discipline*

When Fripp answered the call of King Crimson in the early Eighties, he found himself operating with a new array of influences and sonic tools: the at-turns delicate and quirky vocal stylings of Belew, Levin's octave-spanning Chapman Stick, the possibilities of a dual-guitar attack, the gloss of New Wave and the interwoven ensemble complexity derived from gamelan music. "Frame by Frame" is an essential showcase for all of the above, with Fripp and Belew teaming for a brain-rattling pattern where the guitarists briefly diverge into two different meters, only to align once more.

1. "Fracture"

King Crimson, from 1974's *Starless and Bible Black*

"'Fracture' is impossible to play," Fripp wrote in his online diary in 2016. For most people, that's 100 percent accurate. But Fripp is not most people: He mastered the 11-minute instrumental for King Crimson's sixth studio LP, and he's played it dozens of times onstage — a remarkable feat of mental, physical and perhaps even psychological endurance. The crux of "Fracture," of course, is the three-minute section featuring his "moto perpetuo" ("perpetual motion") technique, wherein his flurries of string-skipped notes unfurl over a dynamic rhythm section. "Fracture" may not be "impossible to play," but it's been a challenge, even for Fripp: "It took a year to bring my [*practicing*] up to speed, as it were," he wrote, "and four months directly and specifically on 'Fracture.' My wife had quite enough after a few weeks, so I had to lock the door to the cellar where I practice." Staying in "Fracture"-ready shape may be a lifelong commitment — but all that matters is that he nailed it in the studio. One of rock's most technically challenging pieces never sounds like rote muscle-flexing — in Fripp's busy hands, the whiplash comes off as graceful. GW

was like anything else — it didn't matter if it sounded cool. It was purely like, 'Can I figure this out?'" The simple answer: yes and no. Garone has spent 22 frustrating and eye-opening years attempting to decode the 11-minute composition (particularly the three-minute section defined by Robert Fripp's "moto perpetuo" technique) — a challenge demonstrated on his YouTube channel Make Weird Music, and later in his densely packed memoir-meets-instructional-guide *Failure to Fracture*.

"I didn't think about 'Fracture' as a song. I thought, 'This is food for a guitarist'"
— ANTHONY GARONE

Within, Garone details the technical expertise he acquired in pursuit of learning "Fracture" — including wisdom bestowed by Fripp himself during a week-long instructional course in 2015. One day, the guitarist told his students, "Spend eight hours a day picking one open string, and then we can have a conversation." Garone laughs at the memory: "It's like when you hear these nutrition experts saying, 'All you've gotta do is cut sugar out of your diet!'" Of course, nothing is easy about "Fracture." "What people misunderstand is you're not playing 10 or 11 notes per second — you're changing strings 10 or 11 notes per second," he says. "You have to be a robot." And that analytical approach suits Garone, a prolific transcriber and tinkerer. "I've just always had that engineering mindset where it's something to pick apart," he says. "But man, if you get me listening to 'Jupiter' by Gustav Holst, I'll still tear up after how many listens. I look at Crimson — and any other music — as half-emotional and half-architectural."

— Ryan Reed

Gibson

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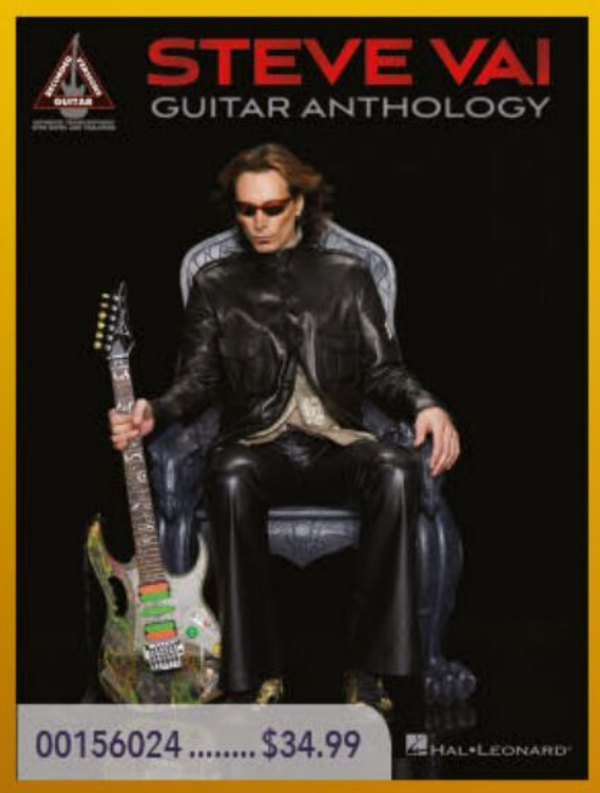

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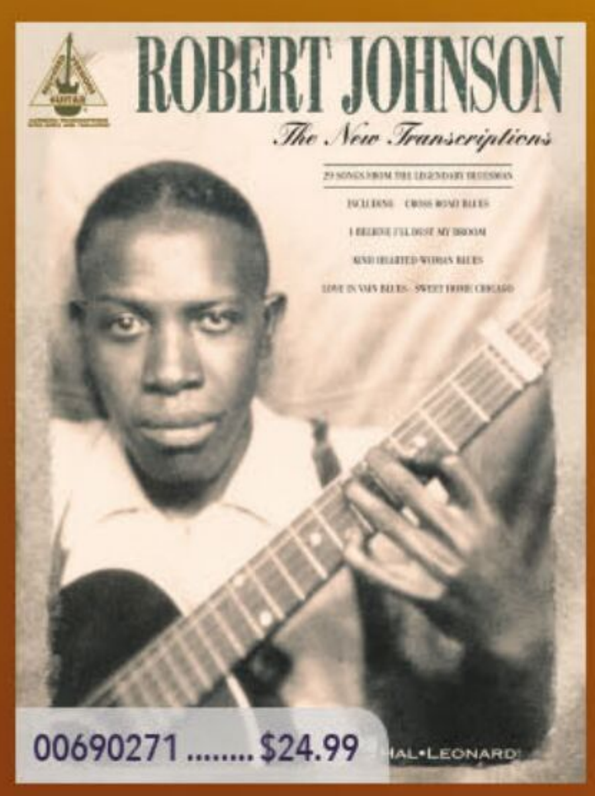

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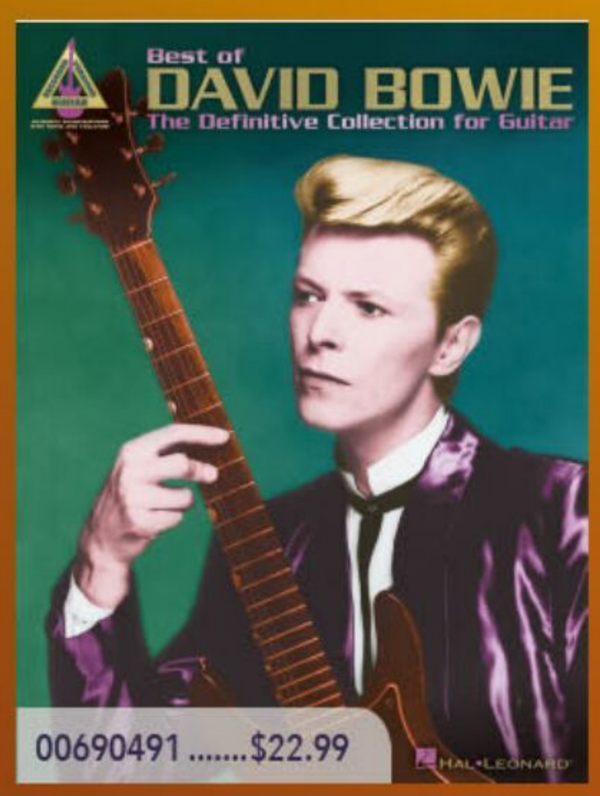

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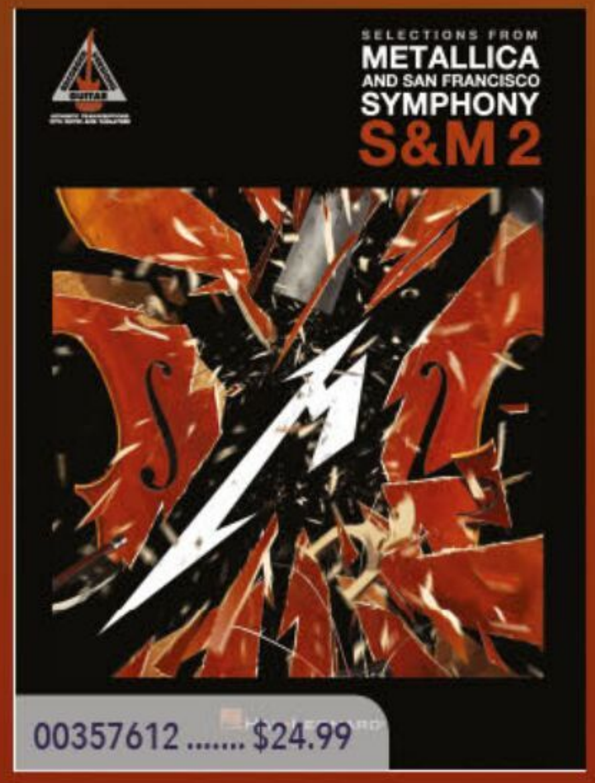

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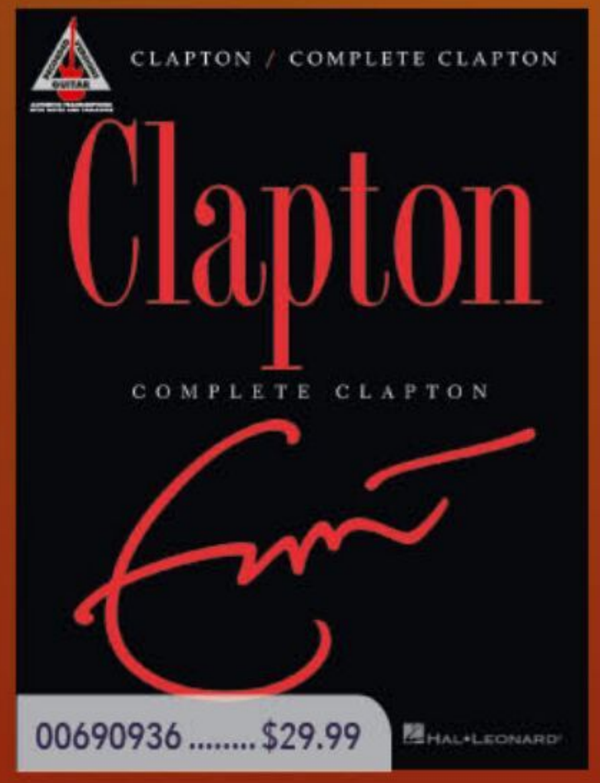

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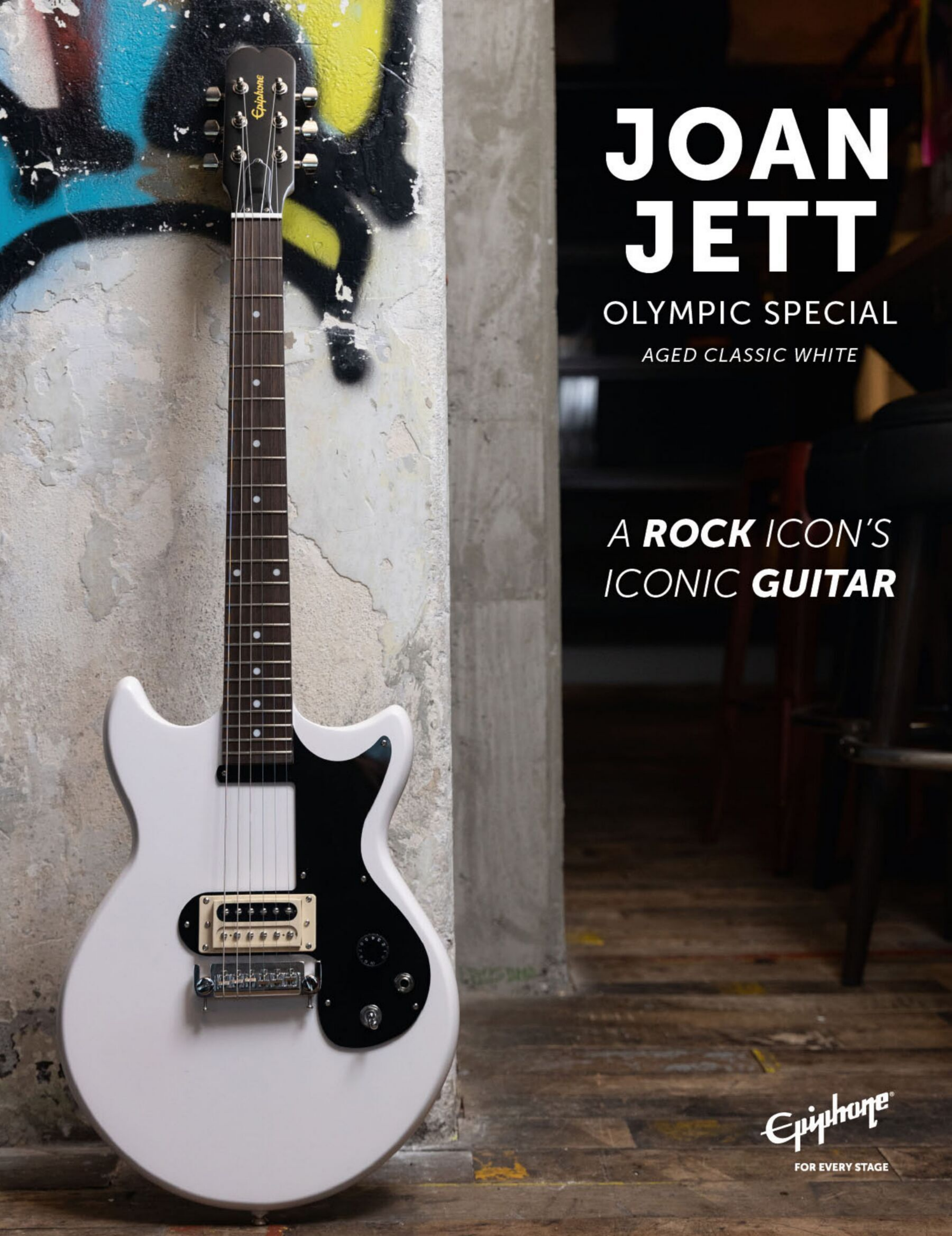
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SOUND CHECK

The PRS Guitars SE Silver Sky in Dragon Fruit

the gear in review

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The Sky's the Limit

PRS GUITARS SE SILVER SKY

By Paul Riario

AT THIS POINT, I'd like to think we've moved past the controversy surrounding the Silver Sky model introduced by PRS Guitars and John Mayer. As a collaborative signature instrument that's distinctive for Mayer and his style of playing, I'll concede there's nothing avant-garde about the Silver Sky; nevertheless, "haters gonna hate" over its similarities to another iconic guitar. But those who have dug deeper into what makes the Silver Sky noteworthy from its adopted beginnings already know that the clear-cut refinements in its design are as considerably thoughtful as they are ergonomic. Many great players have discovered this, and have since embraced the Silver Sky as an idealized version of the other renowned single-coil star. The only obstacle has been its premium cost, which has made it out of reach for younger players. With that, many have anticipated that PRS would release the more down-to-earth SE version of this model, and now, we can say that day has finally arrived with the introduction of the SE Silver Sky. Like the orignal PRS version, every curve and component has been meticulously calculated and chosen by Mayer and Paul Reed Smith for this SE model. Don't think of it as a mere redux, but more of a nearly uncompromised execution of the Silver Sky that's reasonably priced.

Two views of the PRS Guitars SE Silver Sky in Ever Green

FEATURES The SE Silver Sky is crafted in Indonesia and comes with a poplar body instead of the original's alder, and if you're willing to opine the differences between the two, I'd argue they're almost negligible. The bolt-on satin-finished maple neck with a rosewood fretboard is festooned with PRS's trademark bird inlays that are noticeably smaller, and in case you're wondering, this SE doesn't come in an all-maple neck and fingerboard version — at least not for now. The neck also sports 22 narrow/tall frets, a 25.5–inch scale length and preserves Mayer's "635JM" evenly-rounded C-shape neck carve found on the original; but this time around, what's new is the 8.5–inch fretboard radius, which splits the difference between a vintage rounded 7.25–inch and a contemporary flatter 9.5–inch fretboard radius, making it suitably comfortable for exaggerated bends and chording. The three single-coil 635JM "S" pickups have been voiced to mirror the original model, and there's also the retooled volume and two tone controls, and 5-way blade pickup switch with a wide and easy-to-flick switch tip. The guitar has a two-point steel tremolo that's set flush to the body (just the way Mayer uses it), a synthetic bone nut, vintage-style tuners, and the PRS double-acting truss rod accessible from the front of the headstock. Look closely and you'll see the PRS headstock shape is inverted — because if you're going to do an offset three-on-a-side tuner placement, I personally find the reverse headstock makes the Silver Sky look even hipper, not to mention, having better intonation as a by-product. Finally, the SE Silver Sky comes in four distinct colors — Dragon Fruit, Ever Green, Stone Blue and Moon White. Fans hoping for Roxy Pink or the "flip-flop" Lunar Ice finish might have to wait.

PERFORMANCE With import guitars, you can generally feel or find areas on the instrument where corners are cut to make it less costly. For the SE Silver Sky, there's no glaring flaws or chintzy parts to make such a disparaging statement, because everything about its white-glove fit and finish is astonishingly on point, and just as important, the guitar's *prêt-à-porter* setup is groomed for the stage right out of its accompanying gig bag. Riding my hand up and down the guitar's effortless neck profile is as remarkable as the impeccably well-dressed fretwork that adds to its nimble playability. So, it's easy to see why Mayer didn't just sign off on it solely as an affordable alternative — he's just as at home playing this SE version as he is playing the original one.

Picked up and strummed unplugged, the guitar rings out loudly against its sleekly designed frame, but plugged into a variety of boutique amps, what I hear first is the articulate note-to-note definition from the 635JM "S" pickups. Beyond that, I find the pickups emit a lean low end, but it's their super snappy and mid-focused attack that will more than compensate for that lack of density and body. And you'll clearly hear that stinging single-coil bite with a gut-punching, transient bass response when you strike notes in the bridge, middle, and neck positions. Furthermore, I also find that glassy sparkle typical of S-style guitars is not as prominent, but what is more pronounced is the jangly shimmer and marked quack of the in-between positions, which both sound brilliantly crisp. There is a lot to love over the evolved SE Silver Sky as an approachable guitar model dedicated to single-coil aficionados — but you only need to get over the gibbering noise of its critics.

CHEAT SHEET

STREET PRICE: $849
MANUFACTURER:
PRS Guitars,
prsguitars.com

- The three single-coil 635JM "S" pickups are sweetly voiced for stinging bite and high-end chime.
- The guitar features an 8.5–inch fingerboard radius that combines a vintage feel with a modern, slightly-flattened arc for agile playing.
- The SE retains the original 635JM neck shape that features comfortably rounded shoulders.
- **THE BOTTOM LINE:** The SE Silver Sky is something special to behold — not because it's an accessible version, but more that it's nearly indistinguishable in sound and feel from its flagship model.

Encore Performance

MAESTRO PEDALS

By Chris Gill

GIBSON'S RECENT DECISION to revive the Maestro brand name with the introduction of a new line of pedals is truly a no-brainer move as musicians have always held the Maestro name in high esteem. From the debut of the world's very first stomp box effect (the FZ-1 Fuzz-Tone) way back in 1962 through the development of numerous innovative and even revolutionary pedals that shaped the sound of music in the Seventies (and again during the Nineties), Maestro effects earned acclaim that grew into legendary status decades after Gibson discontinued the brand in the late Seventies.

While Gibson could have reissued more than a dozen former Maestro pedals and effects, including the vintage FZ-1 Fuzz ("Satisfaction"), PS-1A Phase Shifter (heard on classic Led Zeppelin, Rush and Isley Brothers songs), oddities like the FSH-1 Filter Sample/Hold or RM-1 Ring Modulator or even the awesome underrated Total Foot Control series pedals designed by Robert Moog, they took a more measured approach by offering five totally new products that are more "meat and potatoes" than "secret sauce." The new line of Maestro pedals consists of the Fuzz-Tone FZ-M, Ranger Overdrive, Invader Distortion, Comet Chorus, Discoverer Delay, which pretty much covers the basic everyday essentials for guitarists.

FEATURES The five new Maestro pedals each share identical sturdy, semi-compact, wedge-shaped housings that measure about 3.45 inches wide and 5.04 inches long and have three knobs in a triangular configuration with a mini toggle switch in the center. A heavy duty true bypass footswitch sits at the bottom center, and ¼-inch input and output jacks plus a standard 9-volt center negative adapter jack are on the back panel. The Fuzz-Tone FZ-M, Ranger Overdrive and Invader Distortion each provide Gain, Level and Tone controls; the Comet Chorus has Depth, Speed and Mix knobs; and the Discoverer Delay features Delay, Sustain and Mix controls. The mini toggle switch provides different functions on each pedal: Modern/Classic character (Fuzz), Hi/Lo gain (Overdrive), Gate On/Off (Distortion), Earth/Orbit (Chorus) and Mod On/Off (Delay). The most distinctive feature overall is the array of red, yellow and blue LEDs that illuminate the classic Maestro horns symbol when the effects are engaged.

PERFORMANCE Maestro's original fuzz pedals ranged from the bees-in-a-bottle buzz of the germanium-transistor FZ-1 and FZ-1A units to the extreme scooped-mid rasp of the silicon-transistor FZ-1S. The new Fuzz-Tone FZ-M comes somewhere in-between, with a wider overall frequency range in both the Modern and Classic settings and smoother, warmer distortion than the typical square wave buzz. The Classic setting comes close to Keith Richards' "Satisfaction" fuzz but with more body that allows it to sound equally good on chords or single notes.

The Ranger Overdrive and Invader Distortion both sound somewhat similar, with a noticeable warm midrange boost when the tone controls are dialed past noon. The Ranger does a good approximation of the usual "Screamer" overdrive tones but with the midrange peak at a lower frequency. The Invader pushes the gain even further into classic rock distortion territory and is ideal for solos with fat body and singing sustain.

The Comet Chorus provides solid classic chorus effects with the added benefit of its Mix control (not commonly found on many chorus pedals in its price range) that enhances "doubling" effects by allowing users to blend unprocessed and processed guitar signals to their liking. The Earth setting is classic chorus, while Orbit is more heavily modulated rotary-style effect. The Discoverer Delay delivers warm, full-bodied analog delay effects with times ranging from 20 to 600ms. The modulation can be customized by adjusting internal trim pots for rate and width.

CHEAT SHEET

STREET PRICE: $149 (Fuzz-Tone FZ-M, Ranger Overdrive, Invader Distortion, Comet Chorus) or $159 (Discoverer Delay)
MANUFACTURER: Gibson, maestroelectronics.com

- A mini toggle switch provides different functions on each pedal, from Classic/Modern character (Fuzz-Tone FZ-M) to modulation on/off (Discoverer Delay).
- All five pedals share common features like true bypass switching, heavy duty wedge-shaped cases and a trio of red, yellow and blue LEDs.
- **THE BOTTOM LINE** The Maestro legacy lives on with a long-awaited return that introduces five new pedals that capably cover the daily needs of guitarists with affordable, no-nonsense overdrive, distortion, fuzz, chorus and delay effects.

Top Models

TAYLOR AD27E FLAMETOP AND AD22E

By Chris Gill

THE VAST MAJORITY of acoustic flattop steel string guitars built today feature spruce tops — in fact, I'd estimate that more than 90 percent of them have spruce tops. In more recent times, luthiers and guitar companies have focused more on experimenting with different materials for the backs and sides, but in the not-too-distant past guitar makers were more willing to use different top materials too.

Recent supply chain issues inspired Taylor Guitars master guitar designer Andy Powers to think outside the (typical flattop) box, and he decided to work with readily available materials when developing new models for the company. Taylor's ample supply of big leaf maple inspired the new AD27e, which uses that material for the back, sides and, most interestingly, the top. Taylor's new AD22e features a solid Sapele back and sides and solid mahogany top, similar to the previous Taylor AD27 American Dream model, but this is the first time Taylor has offered that tonewood combination on a smaller Grand Concert model. Both guitars provide tonal personalities that are different from the usual acoustics on today's market, making them great for players looking for an addition to their acoustic arsenal as well as anyone seeking acoustic tones that stand out from the crowd.

FEATURES Although the AD27e Flametop is similar to the American Dream Series' previous AD27e model, it is not simply the same guitar made with a big leaf maple top, back and sides and hard rock maple neck replacing its predecessor's mahogany top and neck and Sapele back and sides. Powers modified the V-Class bracing to provide a warmer, rounder tone that still delivers bold projection. The AD27e even ships with different strings than usual. The D'Addario Nickel Bronze .012-.052 strings are specifically paired with the AD27e to enhance its woody, dusky tone. Other important features include a 16-inch wide body with satin "Woodsmoke" finish and shaded edgeburst around the entire body and neck, eucalyptus fretboard and 25 ½-inch scale length.

The AD22e is the first smaller-size Grand Concert model to join Taylor's American Dream Series, built from a tonewood recipe that consists of a solid mahogany top, solid Sapele back and sides, mahogany neck and eucalyptus fretboard. With its 15-inch body width, 4 3/8-inch depth and 24 7/8-inch scale length, it is ideal for players seeking a smaller instrument with focused midrange perfect for fingerstyle and numerous other styles of music. The Urban Sienna matte finish gives the guitar a rich brown hue that complements the natural wood grain.

Features that both models share in common include Taylor's Expression System 2 electronics with three behind-saddle sensors and bass, treble and volume controls, chamfered body edges for enhanced playing comfort, Tusq nut, Micarta saddle, Taylor tuners, tortoise-style pickguard, 1 ¾-inch nut width, 20 frets and 4mm Italian acrylic dot fretboard inlays.

PERFORMANCE The construction of both the AD27e Flametop and AD22e is stellar, which is a given for all Taylor guitars but still worthy of mentioning. The setup from the factory is perfect, providing outstanding playability right out of the box after a quick tuning adjustment. The necks have Taylor's characteristic slim, fast feel, and the chamfered body edges truly do provide a comfortable feel.

The AD27e Flametop delivers a big, masculine voice with exceptionally dynamic response. Its tone is truly unique thanks in part to the nickel bronze strings, which enhance the softer, mellower textures when played with a light touch and make the guitar sound brighter, bigger and bolder when played with heavier force. This guitar covers an impressive range of tones just through playing dynamics, but with a consistent roundness and woodiness throughout, even when amplified via the Expression System 2 electronics. The flame figuring throughout — including the back and sides as well as the top — looks as gorgeous as the guitar sounds.

The AD22e should prove irresistible for fingerstyle players whether they specialize in folk, Celtic, blues or even jazz styles. Like the AD27e Flametop, it too supplies a compellingly rich and woody tone, although its overall range is more midrange focused, with less bass thump and slightly more sparkling treble. Still, it sounds much bigger than its body size, making it ideal for players who prefer the comfort of a smaller body without sacrificing too much range.

Taylor's AD27e Flametop [*far left*] and AD22e

CHEAT SHEET

STREET PRICES:
$2,199, AD27e; $1,699, AD22e
MANUFACTURER:
Taylor Guitars, taylorguitars.com

The AD27e Flametop features a big leaf maple top with customized V-Class bracing that enhances a darker, woodier character.

The AD22e is the first smaller Grand Concert shape model to join Taylor's affordably priced, classic-themed American Dream series.

The body edges of both models are chamfered to provide enhanced playing comfort.

Both models feature Taylor's Expression System 2 electronics featuring three behind-the-saddle sensors and treble, bass and volume control knobs.

THE BOTTOM LINE:
These new additions to Taylor's American Dream series provide highly appealing tones with unique character, perfect for performers seeking sounds that stand out from the crowd or session players looking for tones that occupy an ideal spot in a mix.

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GC/Fender Custom Shop Dealer Select Stratocaster HST Journeyman

GUITAR WORLD PLATINUM AWARD EXCELLENCE

THE COMMENTS SECTION of social media posts for brand-new guitars is like catnip for guitarists. Just scroll through the polarizing opinions from the clowder of the "cooler than thou" as they incessantly debate said guitar's worthiness or dissect its looks with a pithy "beauty is in the eye of the beholder" — only to beat that aesthetic down to within an inch of its proverbial life. But since there's no place for that diatribe here, allow me to put in my two cents toward a newly released one — the Guitar Center Exclusive Fender Custom Shop Dealer Select Stratocaster HST Journeyman. Sure, that's quite a mouthful, but wait — Guitar Center? Yes. Whether you knew it or not, the music retailer has been collaborating with blue-chip guitar manufacturers like the Fender Custom Shop to design premium spec'd guitars that are exclusive only to them. What's interesting about this one is that its "HST" acronym denotes the guitar's humbucker/single/Tele pickups. However, from bridge to neck, these pickups are actually in the reverse order. Now, while this Stratocaster's unusual pickup configuration is nothing new (e.g. Robin Guitars Ranger), it will raise some eyebrows over its hybrid design and relic'd look that comes in five striking "aged" metallic colors. Whether that induces aversion or adoration from the masses is inconsequential, because everything about this Custom Shop Stratocaster designed by GC — from its wealth of tones to its playability — is spectacular.

Since it's a "Guitar Center Exclusive," it means this guitar can't be reproduced by any other dealer. But besides that, it's still a Fender Custom Shop Stratocaster, which means its attention to detail, components and construction are off the charts. For example, the HST has that resonant "knock" that emanates from its body to its pickups, which in turn brings an undeniably loud and vibrant sound that reveals its premium build. Speaking of which, the trinity of pickups (FCS "Fat '51 Nocaster" single-coil bridge, FCS "Fat '50s" reverse wound single-coil middle, and Seymour Duncan SH-55 Seth Lover humbucker neck) were selected for their balanced output throughout each of the five pickup selections, but as important, each pickup delivers its own distinct, wide-open tone with a buttery, vintage-like response. The roasted maple neck is quarter-sawn, with a compound radius (7.25"- 9.50") fretboard that encourages dextrous speed, precise intonation and solid comfort — no matter where you play on its fast-feeling neck. I'd like to say the HST is a "marriage of convenience," where modern features meet vintage appointments, and then gracefully merged between a Strat and a Tele Custom (courtesy of its aged white body binding). I'll grant this guitar is not for everyone, but as a stripped down beast that's tailor-made for savvy players who crave versatility and quality, it's a serious contender. No doubt, this is a collectable guitar worth owning and playing for the rest of your life, and though you'll need to stretch for it, it's more affordable than most top-shelf instruments — and that's nothing to get catty about. — *Paul Riario*

STREET PRICE: $4,360
MANUFACTURER: Guitar Center/Fender Custom Shop, guitarcenter.com

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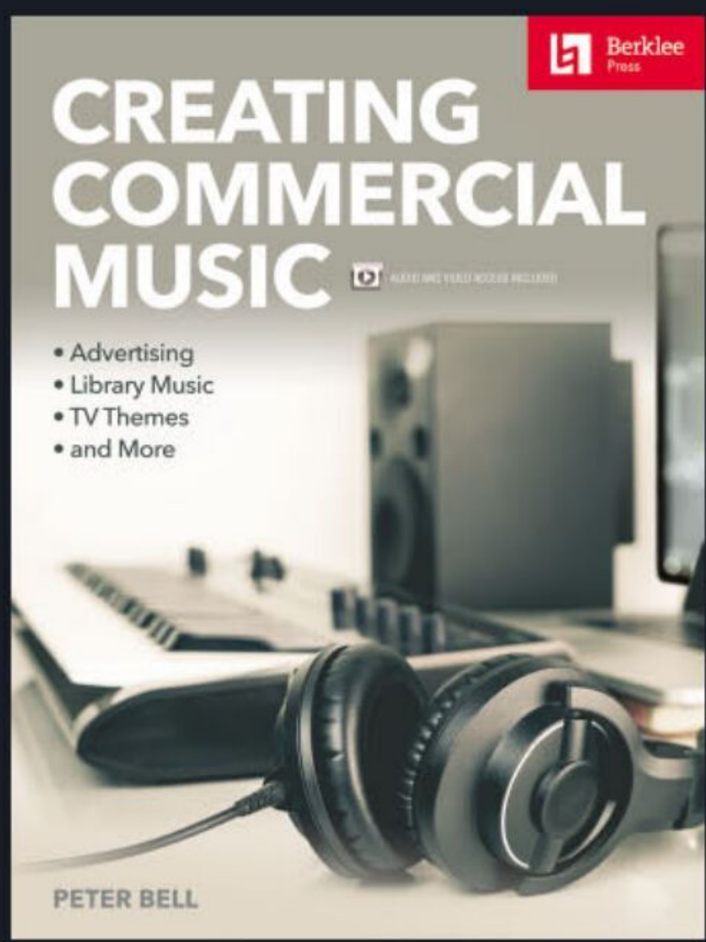

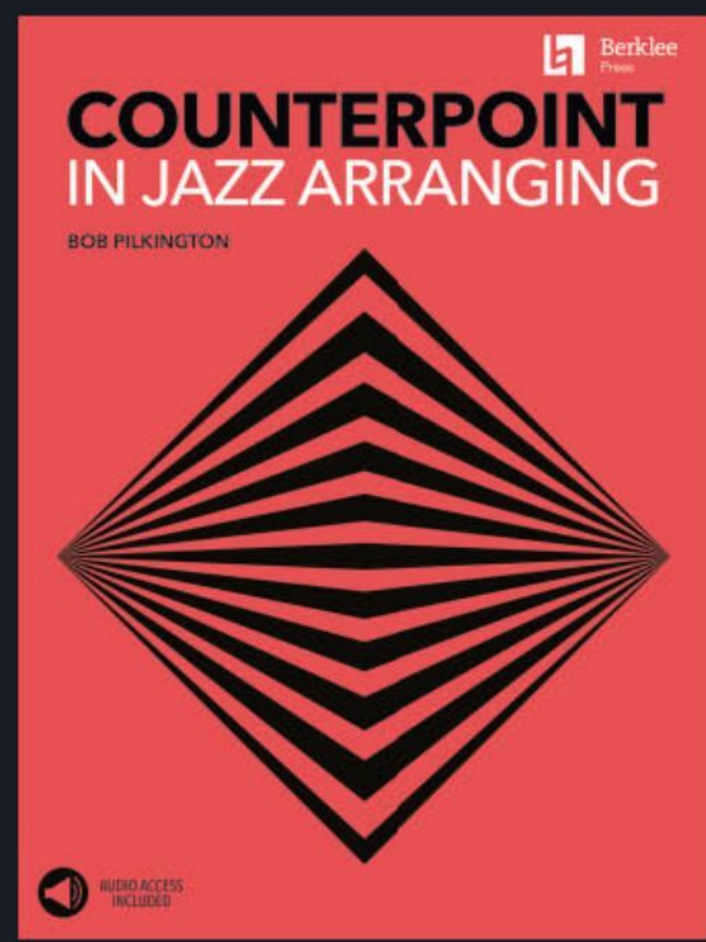

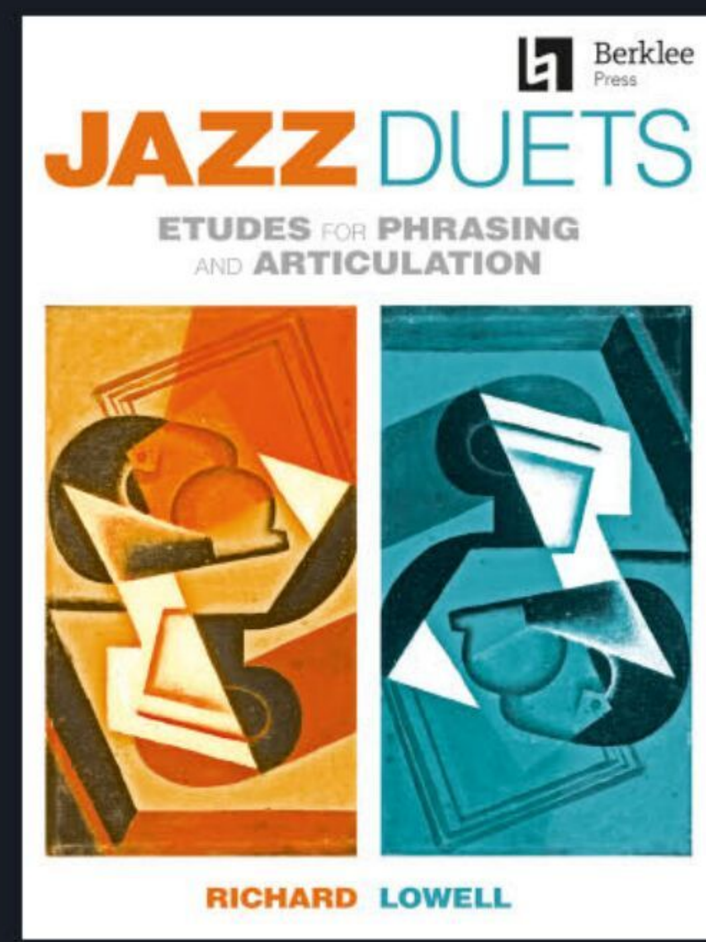

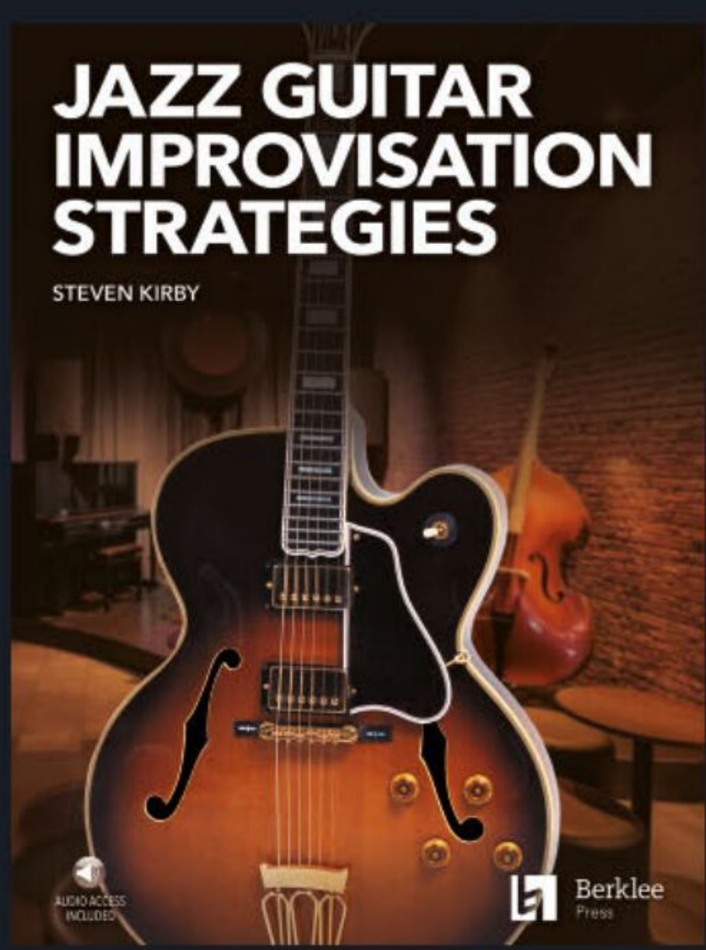

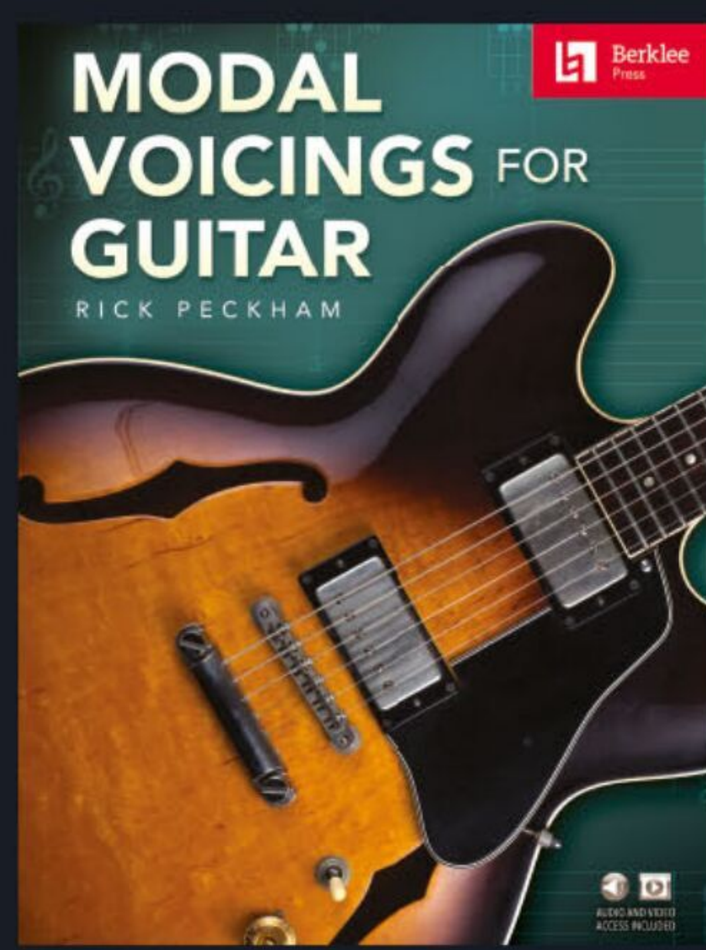

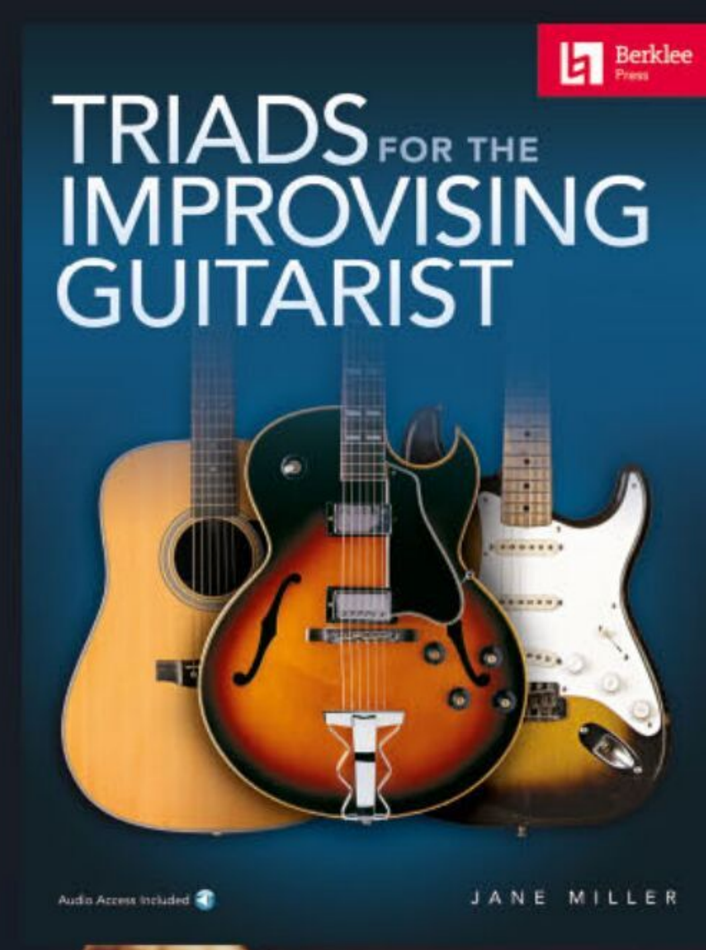

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COLUMNS

IN DEEP

by Andy Aledort

For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/april2022

LIVING THE DREAM

Anatomy of a solo on the Allman Brothers' "Dreams," part 4

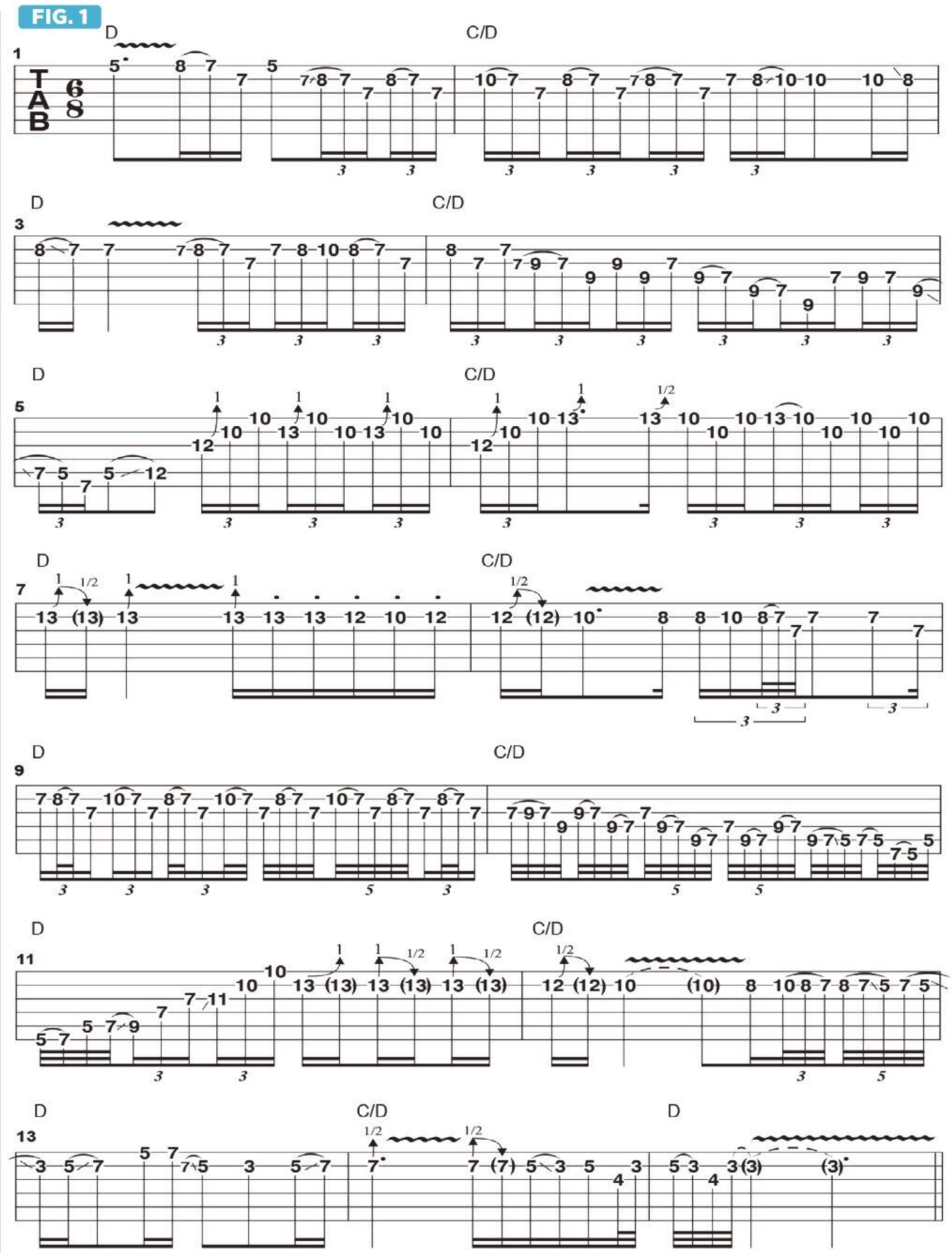
THIS MONTH WILL be the last installment of our analysis of a solo that I played over the two-chord progression heard in the Allman Brothers Band classic, "Dreams." For quick review, "Dreams" is played with a jazz waltz feel in $\frac{6}{8}$ meter, and Duane Allman solos over alternating C/D and D chords, with each chord lasting one bar, which actually feel like two bars of $\frac{3}{4}$. The scales that he relies on for soloing here are D Mixolydian (D, E, F♯, G, A, B, C), D major pentatonic (D, E, F♯, A, B, and D major hexatonic (D, E, F♯, G, A, B). If you check out live versions of this song, you'll hear Duane also draw notes from the parallel D minor pentatonic scale (D, F, G, A, C), which pulls the improvisation into a bluesier direction.

Inspired by Duane, I like to use a similar approach when soloing over this progression, and I'll often make subtle references to his iconic solo from the studio recording while also striving to play lines of my own that are inspired by melodic and rhythmic freedom and spontaneity.

FIGURE 1 presents another 15-bar solo played over our repeating C/D-to-D progression. I actually begin on the I (one) chord here, D, as the phrase in bar 1 sets up the following "call and response" melody that develops over the next three bars. This opening phrase utilizes the notes A, C, B and F♯, followed by a repeating triplet formed from the three-note pattern G-F♯-D. As a whole, reference is made here to the D Mixolydian mode.

Across the next two bars, the patterns alternate between G-F♯-D and A-F♯-D, so this represents a subtle shift from D Mixolydian to D major hexatonic. A good way to think of D major hexatonic is D major pentatonic — D, E, F♯, A, B — with the 4th, G, added — D, E, F♯, G, A, B. These phrases are played as repeating 16th-note triplets, with a triplet figure sounded for each eighth note in the bar: instead of "*one*-two-three," which represents the first three eighth notes in a bar of $\frac{6}{8}$, switching each eighth note to a 16th-note triplet results in "*one*-trip-let, *two*-trip-let, *three*-trip-let," sounded across those three eighth notes.

FIG. 1



In bar 4, I play a descending line similarly phrased in 16th-note triplets, moving primarily between the 9th and 7th frets on the bottom four strings. This is followed with a shift in harmony to D minor pentatonic, starting in the second half of bar 5 through bar 6 and the first half of bar 7.

In this context, minor pentatonic offers a great change in the musical color and mood from major hexatonic.

In bars 9-15, the phrasing becomes more rhythmically complex, so work through the patterns slowly and carefully while listening to the musical example in the video for this lesson. If necessary, slow the video down to 75% or 50% speed to attain a clearer understanding of the rhythmic syncopations inherent in the solo.

***Guitar World* Associate Editor Andy Aledort is recognized worldwide for his vast contributions to guitar instruction, via his many best-selling instructional DVDs, transcription books and online lessons.**

TALES FROM NERDVILLE

by Joe Bonamassa

For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/april2022

FREE TIME

The influence of the great Paul Kossoff

I DISCOVERED PAUL Kossoff from the late, great Pete Way, who is known and loved as the longtime bassist for UFO. A little known and fun fact about me is that when I was 17, I auditioned to replace Michael Schenker in UFO. I didn't get the gig, but I did meet Pete. He was very kind to me, and we maintained a friendship throughout the years.

On the day I auditioned, Pete said my vibrato reminded him of Paul Kossoff. I said, "What's a 'Paul Kossoff?'" He says, "You've never heard of Free? With Paul Rodgers, Simon Kirke and Andy Fraser?" I said, "No!" He then proceeded to make me a cassette of his favorite Free songs, and the first song on the tape was "Walk in My Shadows," which is along the lines of what is illustrated in **FIGURE 1**.

I heard this incredible vibrato, wide and fast, that sounded like what's shown in **FIGURE 2**, and it blew me away! I was thinking, "What is this sound?" This also represented the very beginning of my affinity and longing for the ubiquitous sunburst Les Paul that all of the British rock players used, such as Jimmy Page, Jeff Beck, Eric Clapton and Paul Kossoff.

Hearing Paul created this journey wherein I loved the simplicity of his sound and his vibrato, and when you married Andy Fraser's bass playing with Paul's guitar, the result was some of the heaviest power chords I've ever heard. Andy used a Gibson "SG" bass, the EB-3, and played through Marshalls while Paul played his vintage sunburst Les Paul, also through Marshalls.

This enabled Paul to play some simple two- and three-note chord voicings, like those shown in **FIGURE 3**, and achieve a massive sound. Add to this the voice of Paul Rodgers — perhaps the greatest rock singer of all time — and Simon Kirke's very meat-and-potatoes, rock-solid drumming, and you get the iconic sound that we all know as the sound of Free. **FIGURE 4** illustrates more of these Kossoff-style small chord voicings, along with some of the very simple and melodic lines he'd play in his solos, accentuated by that incredible signature vibrato.

His guitar tone always sounded like it was right on the edge, like the gear was about to "give it up," but it never did, and his feel, his touch, his phrasing and his sense of musicality was wonderful. Arguably one of the best sounds he ever achieved live was on a German television show, where he's playing a stripped Les Paul through an Orange stack sitting on the floor. It just knocks your socks off. **FIGURE 5** offers another example of the Kossoff-style vibrato.

One song I highly recommend checking out is "Fire and Water." The chords are very simple, but the way Paul utilizes these small voicings is very effective. **FIGURE 6** is played in the style of this seminal Free track.

Do yourself a favor and check out the entire Free catalog, as well as Paul's side project, Back Street Crawler. You'll be glad you did!

FIG. 1

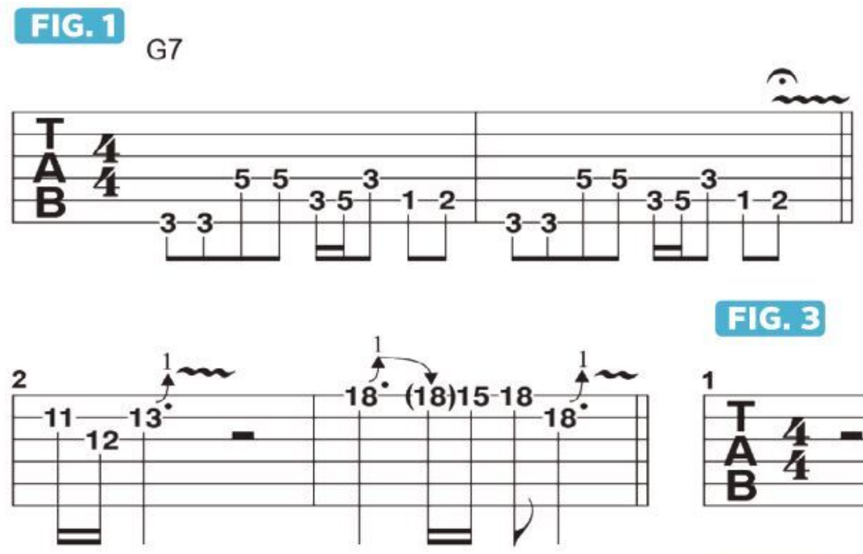


FIG. 2

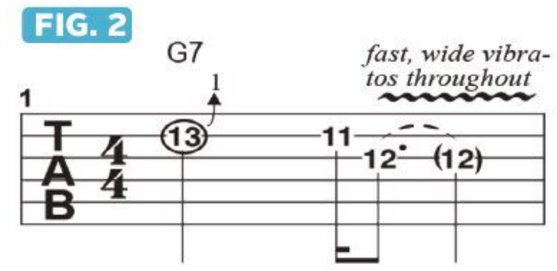


FIG. 3

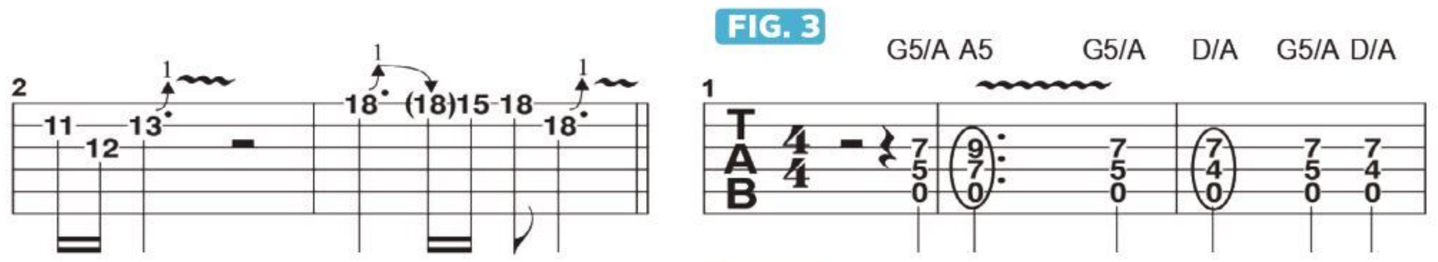


FIG. 4

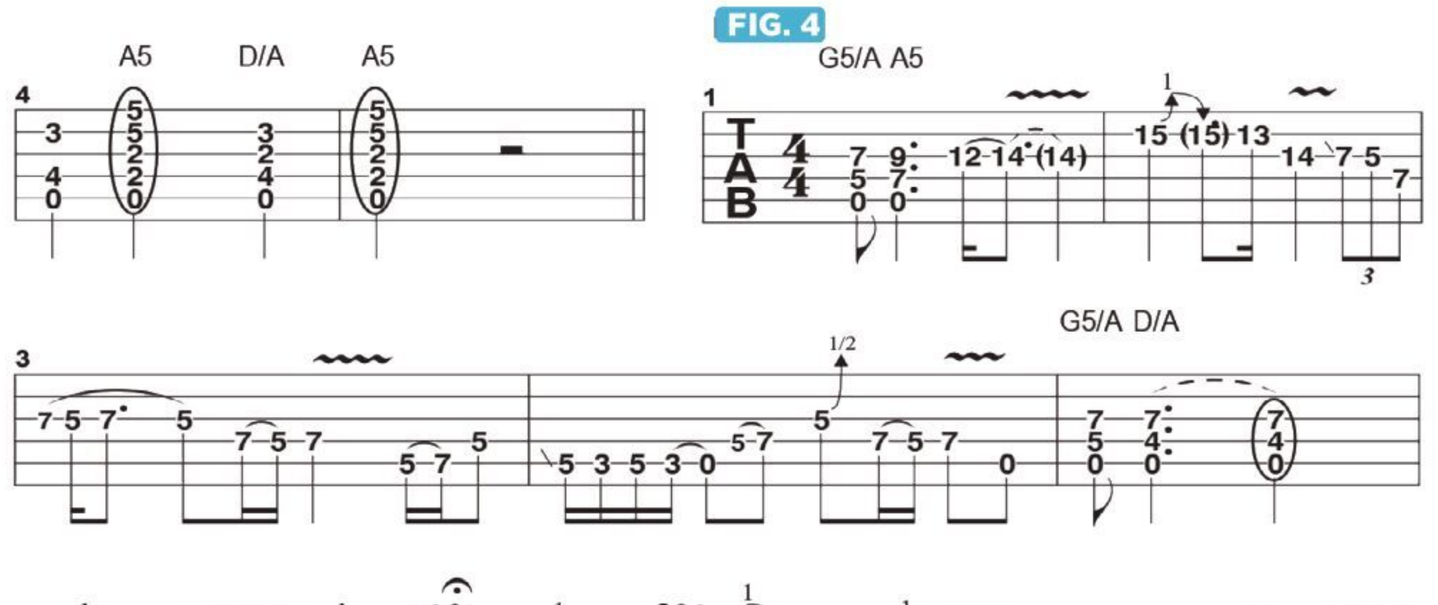
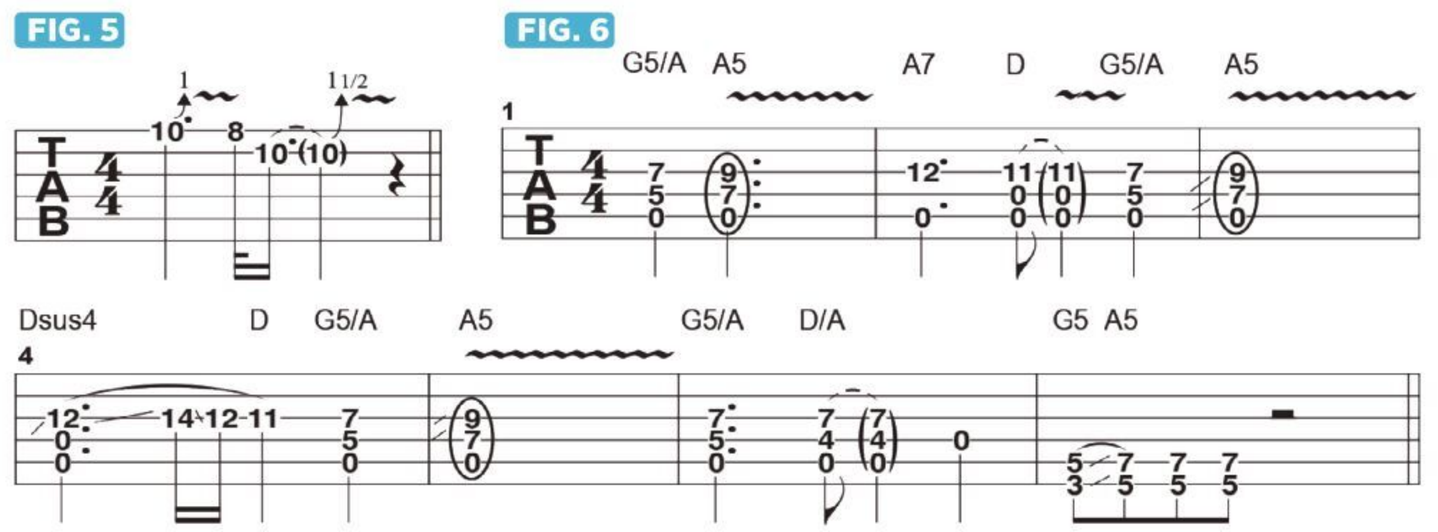


FIG. 5

FIG. 6



Joe Bonamassa is one of the world's most popular and successful blues-rock guitarists — not to mention a top producer and *de facto* ambassador of the blues (and of the guitar in general). His latest album, *Time Clocks*, is out now, as is Eric Gales' *Crown*, which Bonamassa co-produced.

ELEANOR JANE

COLUMNS

MELODIC MUSE

by Andy Timmons

For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/april2022

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

Examining "Take Me with You," part 2

THIS MONTH, WE will continue looking at my tune "Take Me with You," from my latest record, *Electric Truth*. Last month, I demonstrated how I focused on the use of the low wound strings to present the tune's signature melodic lines, as I love the fat, warm sound that the low strings provide. Many players seem to ignore the lower strings while soloing, but I find that using them serves to widen the scope of the musical expression very effectively.

Let's fast-forward to the end of the tune, where the song ramps up to a double-time feel while I continue to perform low-string motifs, some of them repetitive in nature, through the outro section.

FIGURE 1 illustrates the opening lick I play during the outro double-time section. As you can see, the lick is played in a rhythm of straight 16th notes, ascending and then descending through the B minor pentatonic scale (B, D, E, F♯, A). This one-bar line is played five times, and in bar 4 I alter the end of the lick slightly, moving from F♯ - E - D to E - F♯ - A, followed by a tremolo-picked phrase that's based on the F♯ Phrygian-dominant mode (F♯, G, A♯, B, C♯, D, E).

To perform the tremolo-picked line in bars 5 and 6, alternate pick each note in the line quickly — either as fast as possible, if you so desire, or just quickly and at a "fixed" rate of alternate picking — while sliding up through the notes of F♯ Phrygian-dominant.

Throughout this entire section, I'm letting the harmony do the work, in that, while the single-note line repeats, the chords — Bm - A - G - F♯(7) — are changing underneath it as they move in a descending manner, as shown in **FIGURE 2**. Any kind of pentatonic lick is going to sound cool over this progression, because, as each chord goes by, it serves to change the "flavor" of the melodic line.

FIGURE 3 illustrates the one-bar melodic motif, and notice that this line is articulated with specific hammer-ons, pull-offs and slides, which serve to make the line "speak" in a very specific way. An element in this phrase that might seem unusual is the slide from B to D and back to B at the end of beat 2. I use my ring finger (3) for all three notes, fretting the initial B and then simply sliding the finger up three frets, sliding back down and then pulling off to A, two frets below. Notice also the little twist that occurs at the very end of the phrase, as shown here in **FIGURE 4**.

FIG. 1

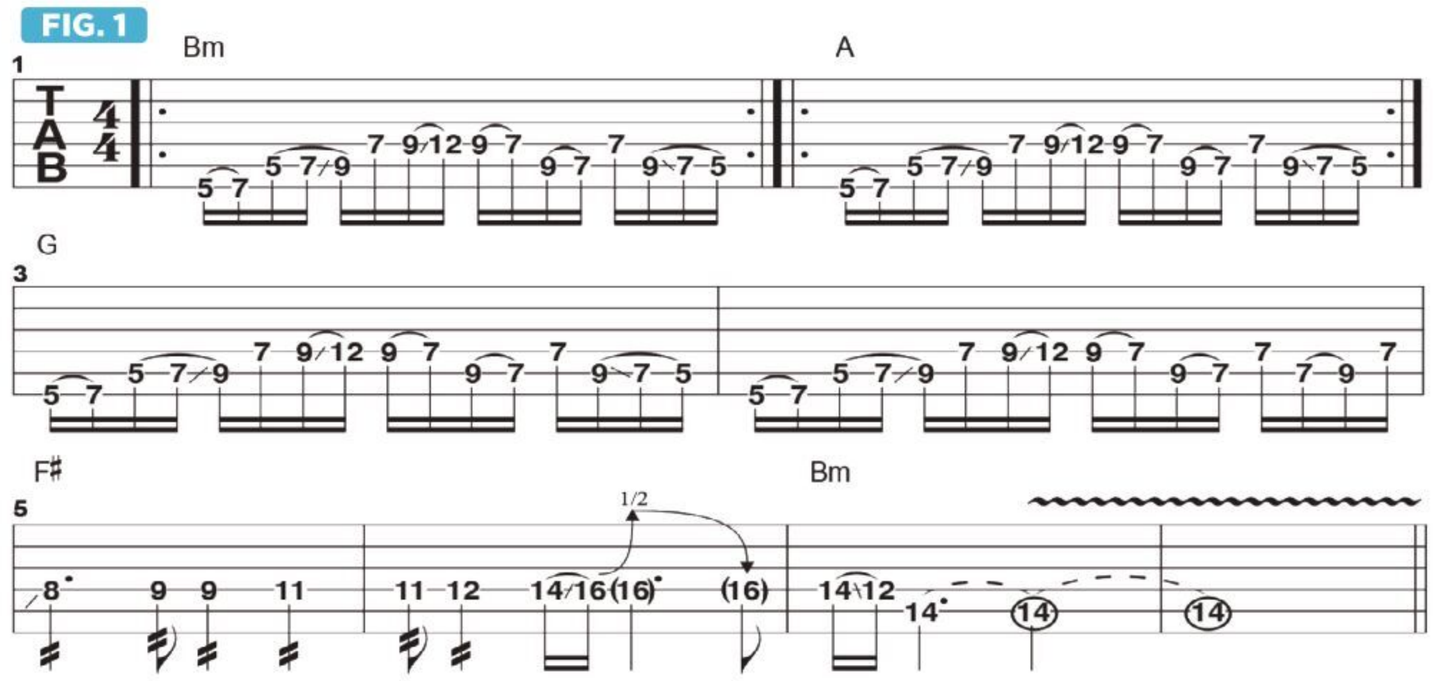


FIG. 2

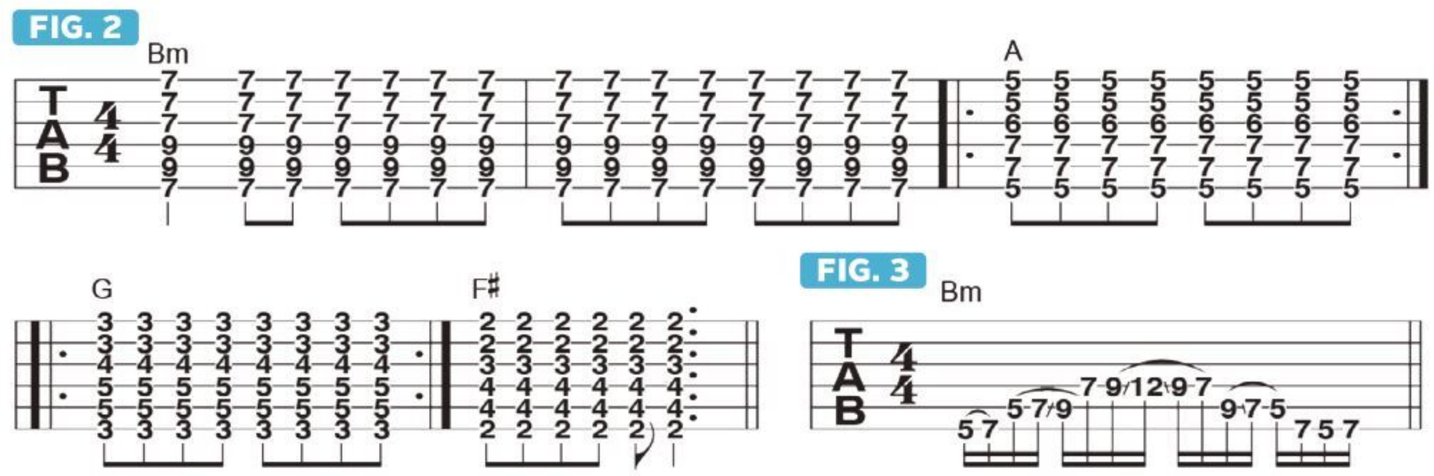
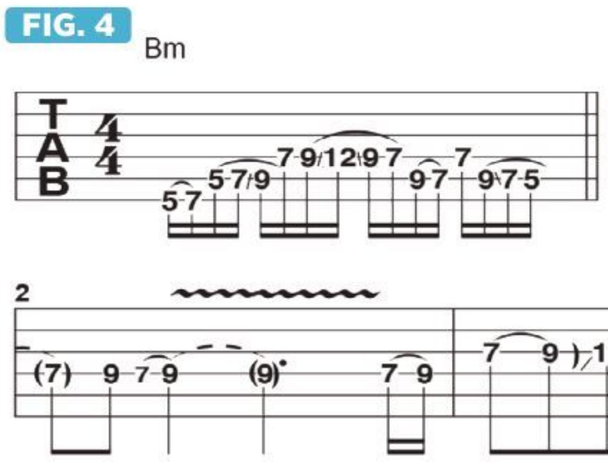


FIG. 3

FIG. 4



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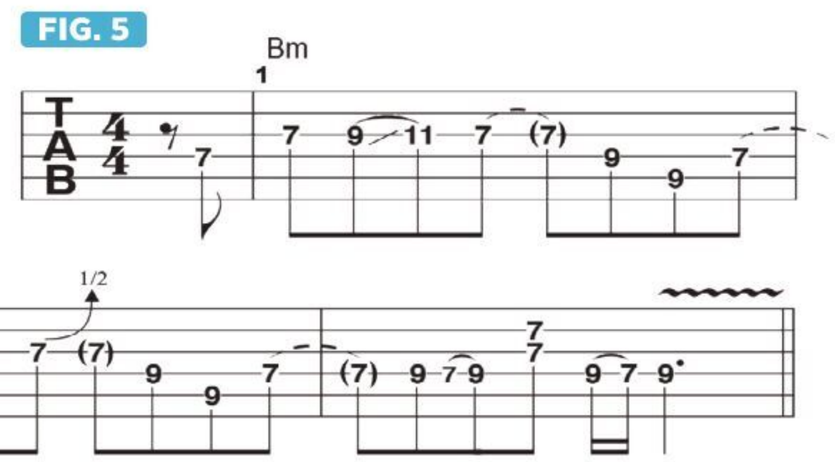

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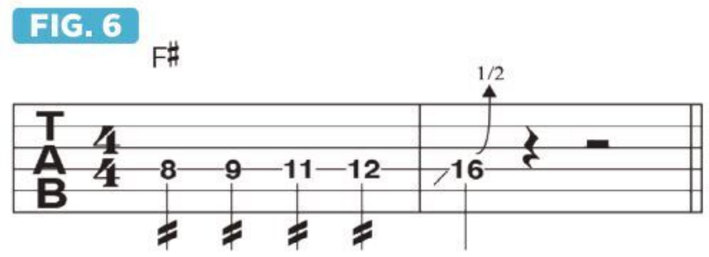
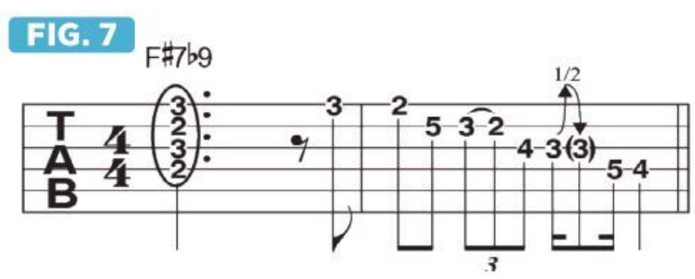


FIG. 7



After the line in "Take Me with You" repeats a few times, I wrap up the melodic idea with the aforementioned lick based on F♯ Phrygian-dominant, simplified somewhat in **FIGURE 6**. Notice the accentuation of the G notes over the F♯(7) chord: G is the ♭9 (flatted 9th), and to my ears it's a beautiful and very effective sound, detailed in **FIGURE 7**. The inclusion of the G creates a perfect resolution back to the tonic, Bm.

Andy Timmons is a world-renowned guitarist known for his work with the Andy Timmons Band, as well as Danger Danger and Simon Phillips. Visit andytimmons.com and guitarxperience.net to check out his recordings and many instructional releases

SIMONE CECHETTI

COLUMNS

BLUES TRUTH
by Kirk Fletcher

For video of this lesson, go to guitarworld.com/april2022

TO A "T"

A glimpse at the playing style of the legendary T-Bone Walker

HELLO, AND WELCOME to my new *Guitar World* column! It's an honor to be here and to have this opportunity to share some of my thoughts about guitar playing and music with you all.

Aaron Thibeaux "T-Bone" Walker is rightfully regarded as one of the greatest and most influential blues guitarists of all time. He is a major influence of mine and of every blues guitarist I've ever known or listened to, from B.B. King, Eric Clapton, Jimi Hendrix, Stevie Ray Vaughan and beyond, and he will certainly remain a vital blues influence for every generation to come.

T-Bone Walker was the epitome of class and excellence, in both his signature original guitar playing style and his incredible singing voice. His playing incorporated elements of jazz and swing while also expressing absolute authority in his feel and touch. The way he stated his phrasing and soloing ideas was revolutionary for the time, which started in the early 1940s.

T-Bone's most famous song is the eternal blues masterpiece "(Call It) Stormy Monday," a slow blues played in the key of G. **FIGURE 1** represents a standard 12-bar blues form, including T-Bone's signature five-bar pickup that he often played before moving into it. In bars 1 and 2, the chord progression moves down in whole steps, from G9 to F9 to E♭9, then down one half step, to D9. For each of these chord voicings, instead of playing the root on the 5th string, I'm playing the 5th below it, on the 6th string, so the chord names are G9/D, F9/C, E♭9/B♭ and D9/A. You will hear T-Bone using this signature intro on many other slow blues songs too, such as "Glamour Girl" and "Mean Old World."

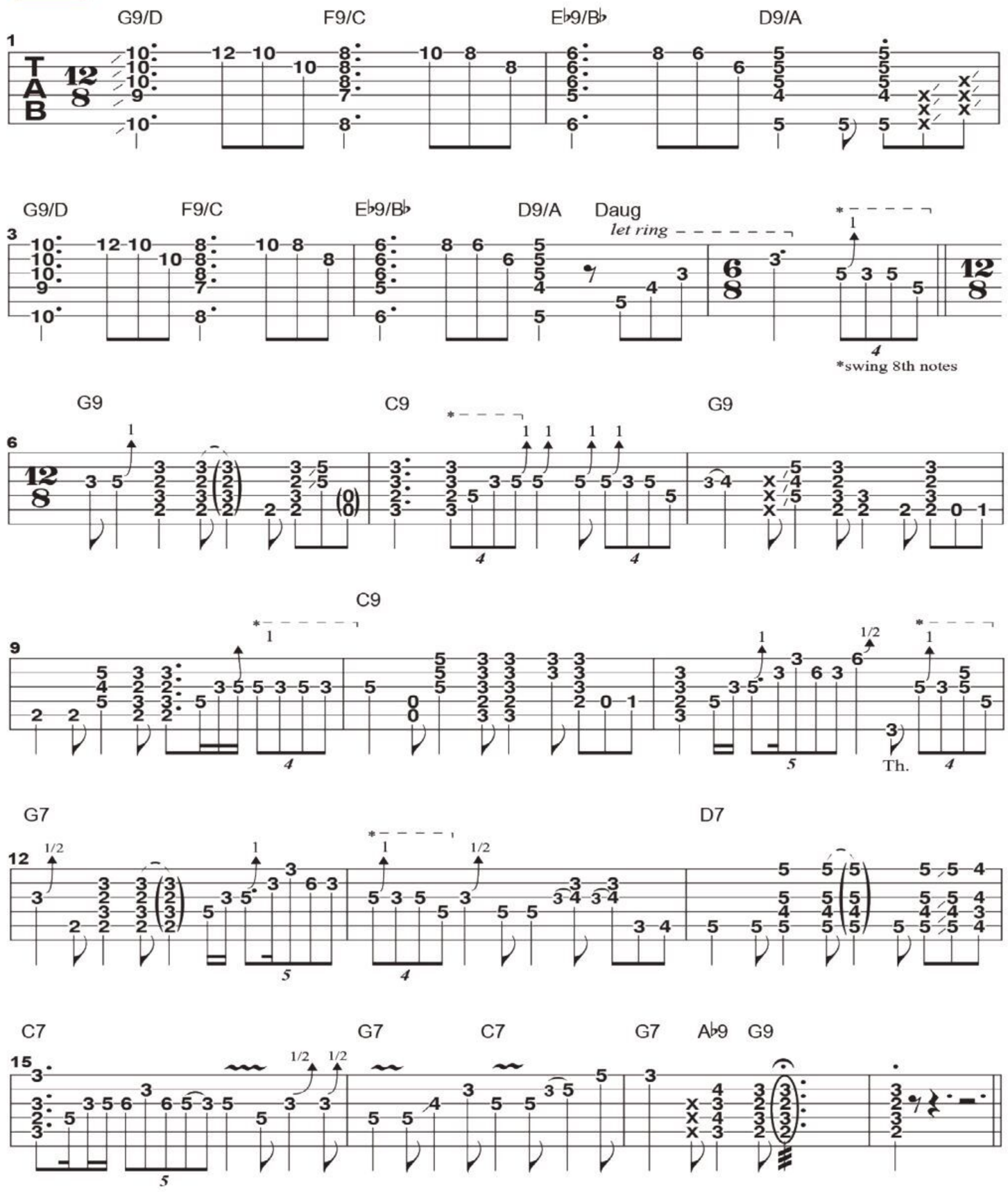
For each of these chords, T-Bone adds the 13th on the high E string, fretted with the pinky, and uses this "upper extension" to add a simple melodic line to each chord. After moving through this descending progression twice, a D augmented chord is played at the end of bar 4, followed by a swinging line that sets up the shift to a low voicing of G9 and the beginning of the 12-bar form proper, in bar 6.

Regarding the single-note phrase in bar 5: notice that the last four notes are written as a group of four swing 8ths. You'll see this same rhythmic notation in bars 7, 9 11 and 12. In these instances, T-Bone is superimposing a $\frac{4}{4}$ feel over the $\frac{12}{8}$ meter, by playing four eighth notes across the beat instead of three. And, as indicated, the notes are phrased with a swing eighths feel ("long short long short").

In bar 15, the rhythmic freedom is pushed a little further on beat 2, with the incorporation of a "5 on 3" phrase, as five eighth notes are squeezed into the space of three.

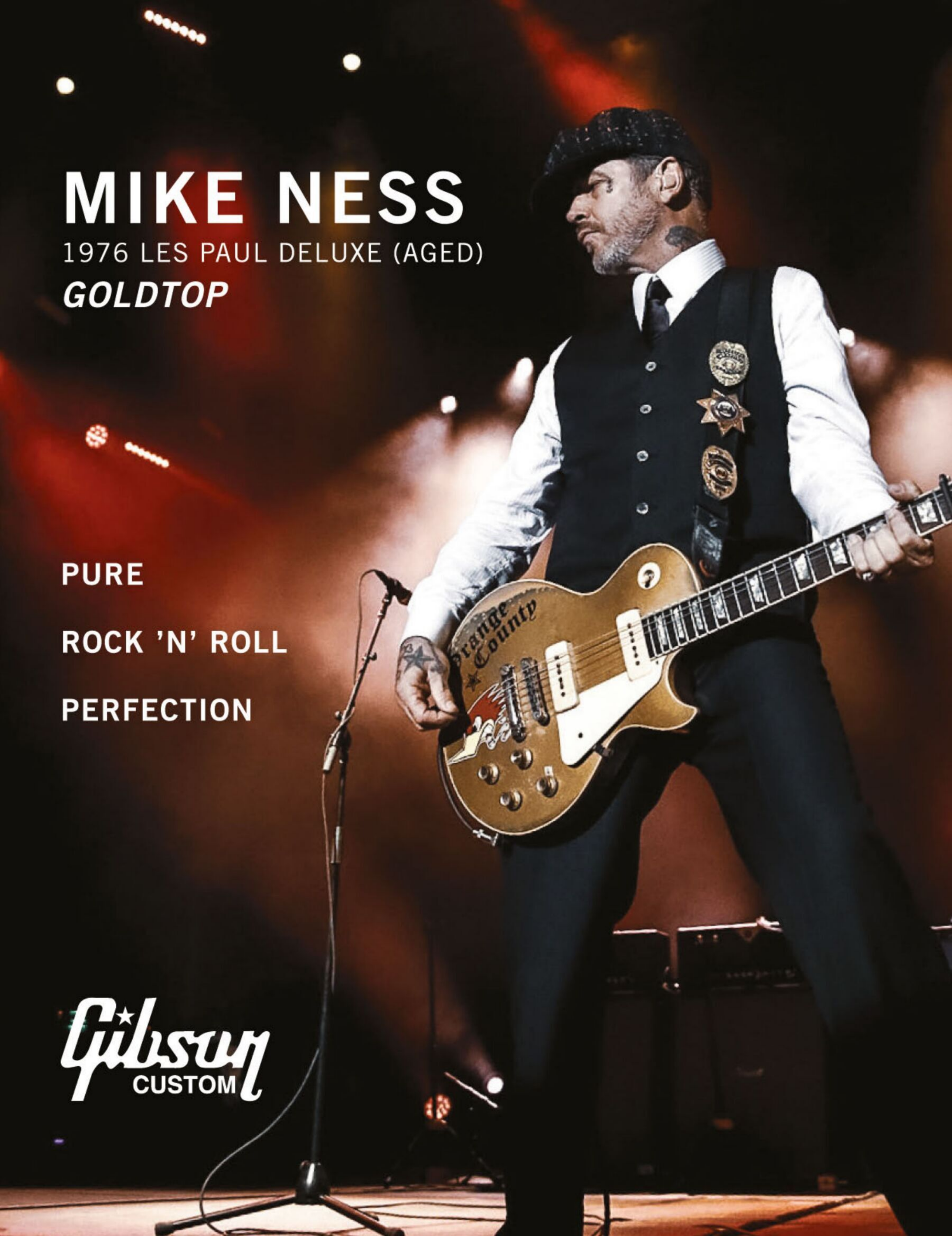
Another signature element of T-Bone's style is to play a diminished chord on the top four strings, such as Gdim7, voiced G, D♭, E, B♭, and slightly bend the top three strings up a half step, so the chord tones sound closer to G7 (G, D, F, B) but articulated with very cool and bluesy sounding ascending bends.

FIG. 1



Kirk Fletcher, a former member of the Fabulous Thunderbirds, is an internationally respected guitarist and teacher. His latest album, *My Blues Pathway*, was nominated for a 2021 Blues Music Award. For more about Fletcher, check out kirkfletcherband.com.

RICK GOULD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HOW TO PLAY THIS MONTH'S SONGS By Jimmy Brown

"PHYSICAL EDUCATION"

Animals As Leaders

ARMED WITH THEIR custom-designed and unusually-tuned 8-string guitars (tuned, low to high, to C♯, A, E, A, D, G, B, E), the supremely talented Tosin Abasi and Javier Reyes created, in collaboration with drummer Matt Garstka, this highly original and musically brilliant instrumental piece that melds a plethora of advanced playing techniques, sophisticated compositional approaches and stylistic cross-pollinations. The result is an exciting suite of themes that feature otherworldly, Holdsworthian fusion-style harmonic structures, rhythmically intricate syncopations, tricky "math-rock" odd-meter phrases and various other elements of modern prog, funk and metal styles.

As indicated at the beginning of the transcription, the playable low range of the guitars' 7th and 8th strings is expanded by a minor 3rd, with an extended fretboard behind the nut. Master transcriber Jeff Perrin arranged the tabs here for performance on standard 8-string guitars. As a result, the fretted notes on the bottom two strings are tabbed three frets higher than where they were originally played.

Approaching his extended-range instrument as a hybrid bass-guitar, Abasi performs this piece fingerstyle and makes great use of the techniques of thumb-slapping, or "thumping" (indicated by the abbreviation TS), and his innovative "thumb up-picking" attack (indicated by TU), which he creatively combines with pitchless, percussive notes muted by the fret hand (indicated by an "X" in the tablature).

Performing on this seemingly superhuman level requires a highly refined degree of control over one's touch on the instrument, particularly when it comes to noise suppression, as you need to lightly palm mute all those low strings when not playing on them because they can otherwise tend to sympathetically vibrate and produce unwanted sounds, even when playing something conventional, such as Reyes' high single-note melody lines in this composition. The technical adaptation challenges pertain to the fret hand too, as regards adjusting your grip on the neck and performing string bends without being able to hook your thumb around the top side of the fretboard, as one would normally be inclined to do.

"BOULEVARD OF BROKEN DREAMS"

Green Day

THIS STANDOUT TRACK from Green Day's 2004 concept album *American Idiot* features some of Billie Joe Armstrong's best songwriting to date, as he sets a poem of pensive lyrics to just the right minor-key chord progression, which he and his bandmates and producer crafted into a poignantly emotive and enduringly appealing pop-rock hit song that conveys varying shades of musical and sonic color.

The song's arrangement features a highly effective and tasteful layering of fairly simple guitar parts, combining raw, overdriven punk-style power chords and strummed octaves with a capo-ed acoustic strum part and some shimmering modulation effects. The intro kicks off with a simple, straightforward repeating four-chord progression (see Gtr. 1), which is treated with a pulsating tremolo effect that's set 100% "wet" and precisely timed to a 16th-note rhythm — four pulsations per beat — relative to the song's tempo. So while Armstrong is strumming mostly straight quarter notes here, a dense rhythmic throbbing effect is achieved.

When the verse begins at section B, an acoustic guitar (Gtr. 3) enters, playing a repeating progression of four open chords, as if the song were in the key of E minor. Due to the use of a capo at the 1st fret, everything is transposed up a half step to the key of F minor, matching the key of all the other instruments.

Looking at the frames at the beginning of the transcription, you'll see that we've included a few extra chord voicings for the Gtr. 3 part that weren't actually played in the recorded arrangement. These are presented as an option for performing the entire song "unplugged" on a capo-ed acoustic guitar. So although Gtr. 3 drops out during the song's Chorus (section C), Interlude (section E) and Outro (Section H), you can use these voicings to provide a satisfying stand-alone, one-guitar rendition of these parts, as well as section G (bar 44), strumming the chords indicated in brackets and following the rhythms of the other guitar parts. The chord names indicated for the climactic multi-guitar Outro (bars 46-49) represent a sort of composite of the single-note bass line and strummed-octaves parts and provide a close rendering of the implied harmony here.

"MASTER OF PUPPETS"

Metallica

CONSIDERED BY MANY to be Metallica's crowning achievement, this thrash metal masterpiece encapsulates the band's bold, fiery spirit and world-class songwriting and arranging talents probably more than any other song in their illustrious catalog. Featuring tight ensemble riffs and tricky rhythmic structures that are at once singable and smooth-sounding yet demanding to play and mentally challenging to count, the track showcases guitarists James Hetfield's and Kirk Hammett's lock-step precision in their articulations of fast eighth-note lines and shifting power chords, with bassist Cliff Burton keeping right up with them in perfect synchronization while locking in with drummer Lars Ulrich's aggressive yet highly polished and poised beats, accents and fills. Essentially, the four lads made everything flow and seem almost effortless, which is the mark of a virtuoso musician, athlete or dancer.

The most technically demanding thing about playing this song is downpicking all of its eighth-note riffs at this wicked-fast tempo. This ability requires an enormous amount of practice to attain, to acquire the muscular coordination, speed and stamina needed to keep up with the pulse without lagging behind or becoming fatigued and cramping up. Although this may sound counterintuitive, a key element here is to try to stay relaxed and make the movements as efficient and economical as possible without wasting any energy by picking any harder than necessary to achieve the desired sound. To this end, it's crucial to dial in just the right high-gain tone — heavily saturated but tight and responsive, with that classic thrash metal scooped-mids EQ curve. You want your amp to do a lot of the work for you and meet you halfway, so that you can play with as light a touch as possible.

I recall learning this song years ago and coming up with a very helpful learning and rehearsal aid. Using an audio editing program on my computer, I created a 90%-speed version of the track to practice playing along to. This gave me a fighting chance at keeping up with the tempo and acquiring the "grace-under-pressure" muscle memory needed to play the song at tempo... well, maybe at 95% speed.

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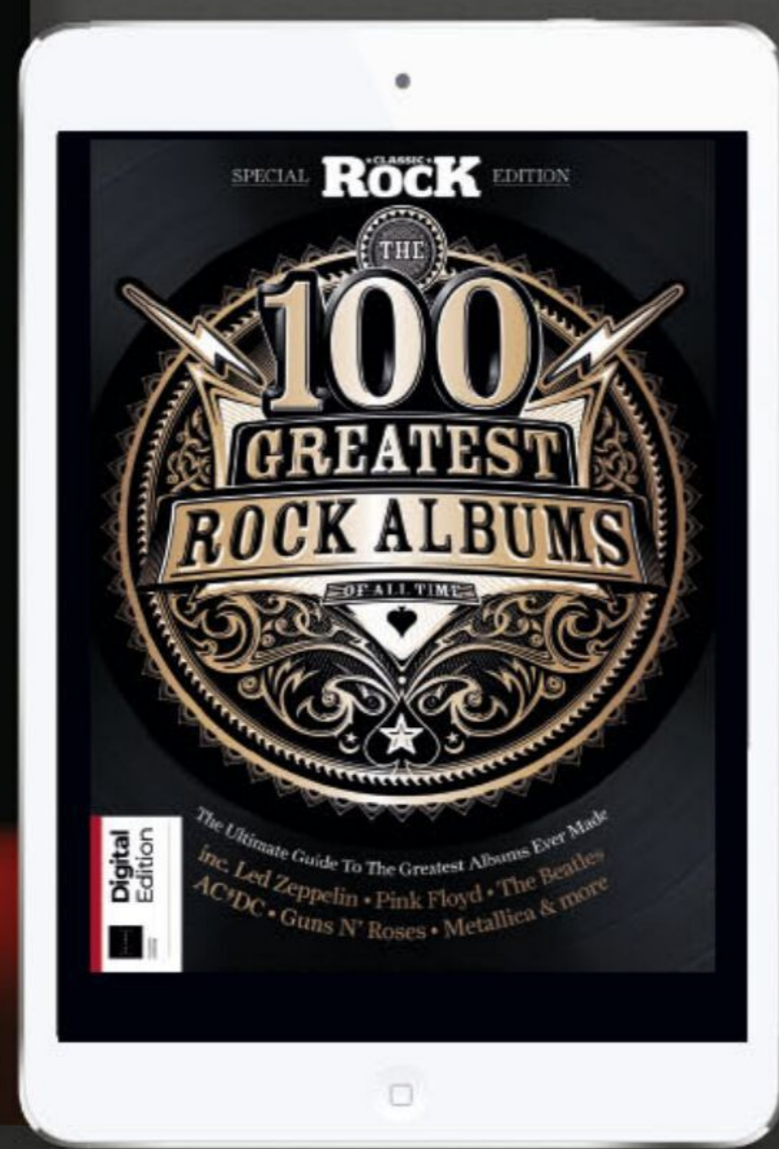

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"PHYSICAL EDUCATION"

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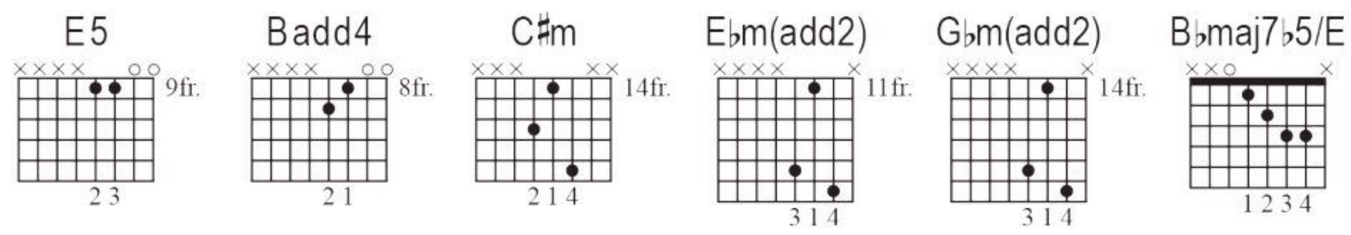
As heard on **THE JOY OF MOTION**

Words and Music by **TOSIN ABASI, MATT GARSTKA** *and* **JOSE JAVIER REYES** • *Transcribed by* **JEFF PERRIN**

All guitars are 8-string guitars in an altered tuning (low to high: C♯, A, E, A, D, G, B, E).



A **Intro** (0:00)

Moderately Fast ♩ = 115

N.C. (A5) (C♯5)

*Gtr. 1 (elec. w/dist.) (Tosin Abasi)

(play 4 times)

Rhy. Fig. 1

pick w/fingers

1 N.H. N.H. N.H. N.H. N.H. N.H. N.H. N.H. N.H. N.H.

*TS TS TS TU TS TS TS TS TU TS TS TU TS

pitch: E C♯

**TS = thumb slap. TU = thumb up (up-pick w/thumb).*

*Gtr. 2 (elec. w/dist.) (Javier Reyes)

(4th time) Gtr. 2 (top note)

Gtr. 3 (bottom note)

**Original recording features custom 8-string guitars where the neck's fretboard extends an extra two-frets (a minor third) below the nut on the bottom two strings. For performance consideration, all parts are arranged for standard 8-string guitars.*

B (0:18)

(A5) (C♯5)

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 (see bar 1)

Gtr. 2

3

(play 4 times)

Gtr. 3 (elec. w/dist.)

Riff A

"PHYSICAL EDUCATION"
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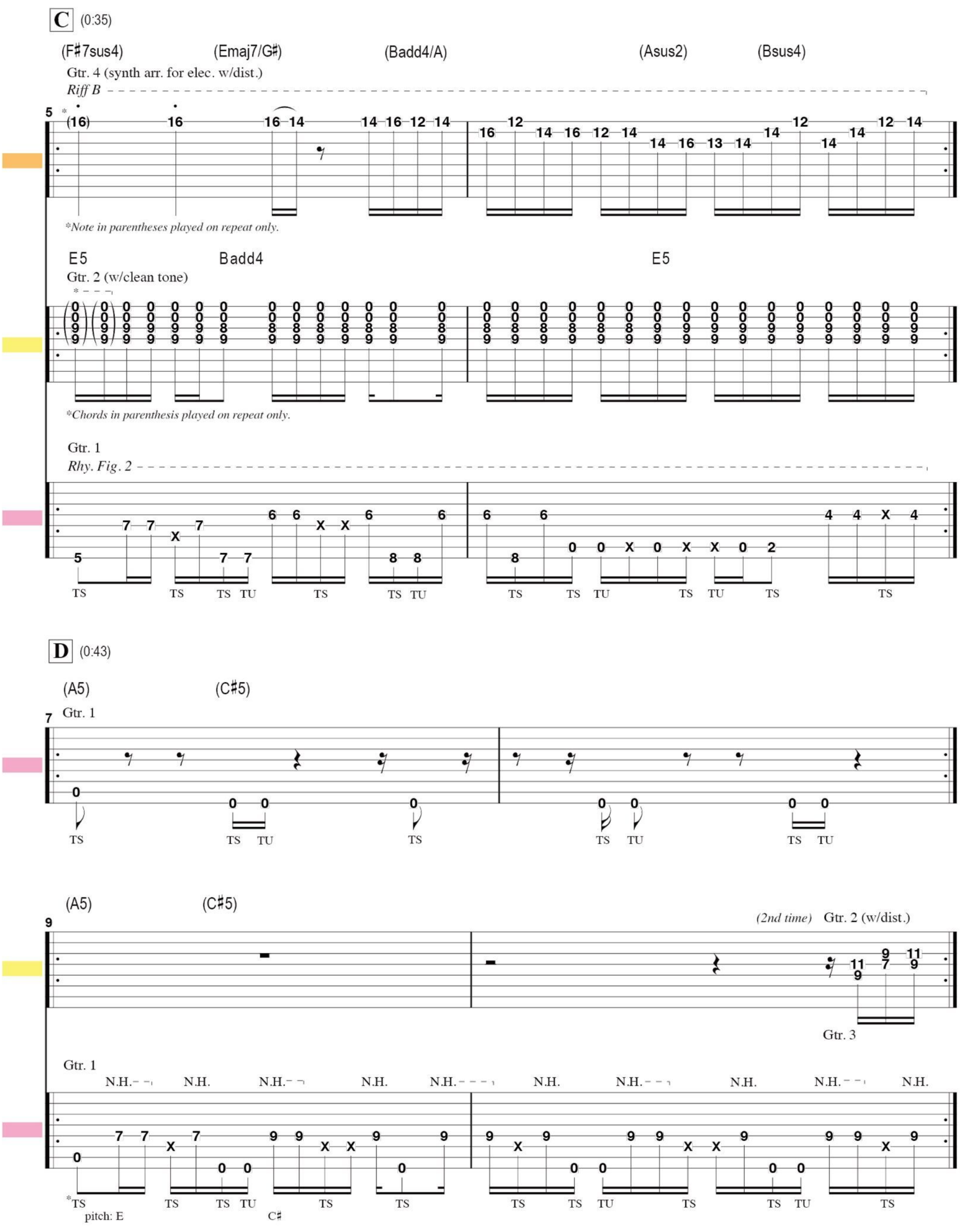

C (0:35)
(F♯7sus4)
(Emaj7/G♯)
(Badd4/A)
(Asus2)
(Bsus4)
Gtr. 4 (synth arr. for elec. w/dist.)
Riff B
*Note in parentheses played on repeat only.
E5
Badd4
E5
Gtr. 2 (w/clean tone)
*Chords in parenthesis played on repeat only.
Gtr. 1
Rhy. Fig. 2
D (0:43)
(A5)
(C♯5)
Gtr. 1
(A5)
(C♯5)
(2nd time) Gtr. 2 (w/dist.)
Gtr. 3
Gtr. 1
N.H.
pitch: E
C♯

E (1:00)

(F♯7sus4) (Emaj7/G♯) (Badd4/A) (Asus2) (Bsus4)

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 (see bar 5)
Gtr. 3 plays Riff A (see bar 3)
Gtr. 2

11

F (1:08)

C♯m

13 Gtr. 1

TS

Gtr. 2
Rhy. Fig. 3

E♭m(add2)

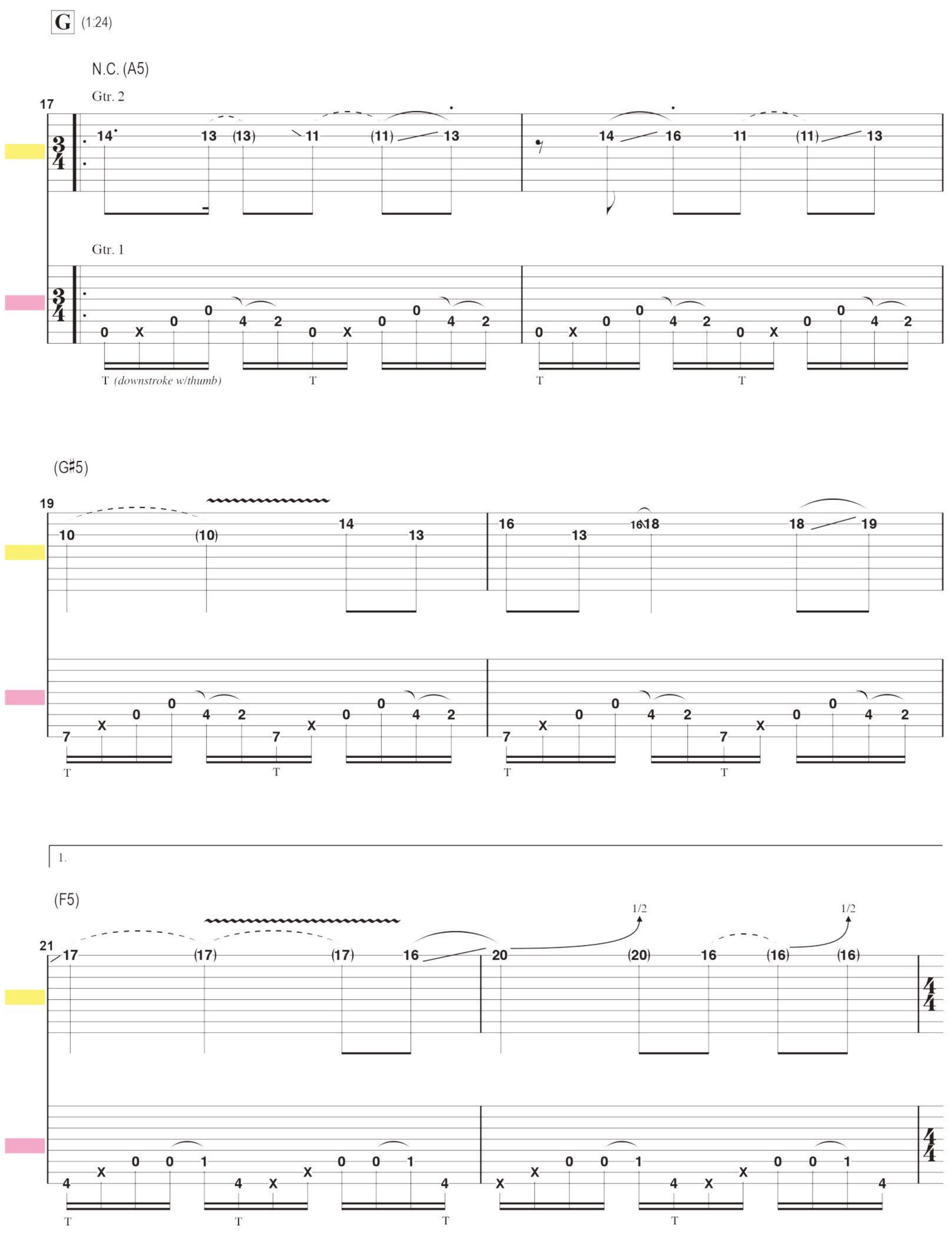
15

Gtr. 2 substitutes Rhy. Fill. 1 second time (see below)

Rhy. Fill 1 (1:20)

G♭m(add2)

Gtr. 2


G (1:24)
N.C. (A5)
Gtr. 2
17
Gtr. 1
T (downstroke w/thumb)
(G♯5)
19
(F5)
21
1/2
1/2

C♯m

Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 3 simile (see bar 13)

23 Gtr. 1

TS TS TS TS TS TS TS TS

2.

N.C. (F) (A/E) B♭maj7♭5/E

Gtr. 2

25

Gtr. 1

T T T

H (1:47)

N.C. (C♯m9) (Em)

Gtr. 2 *(first time only)*

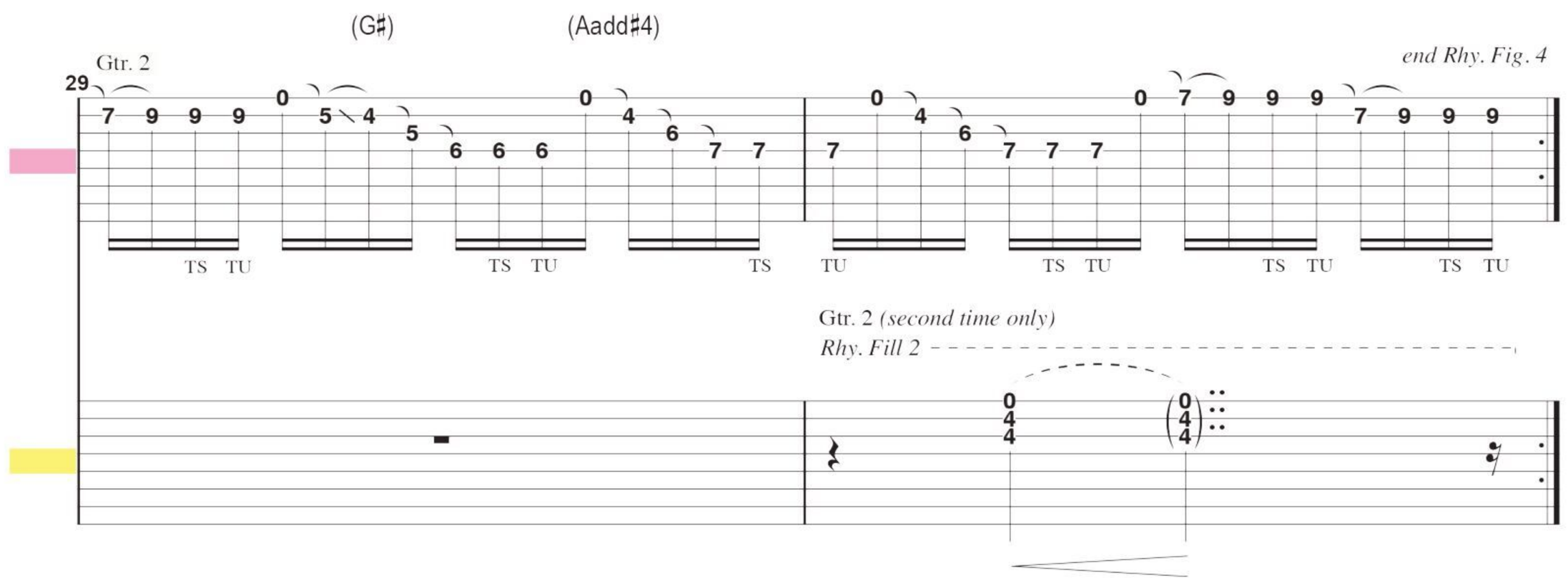
27

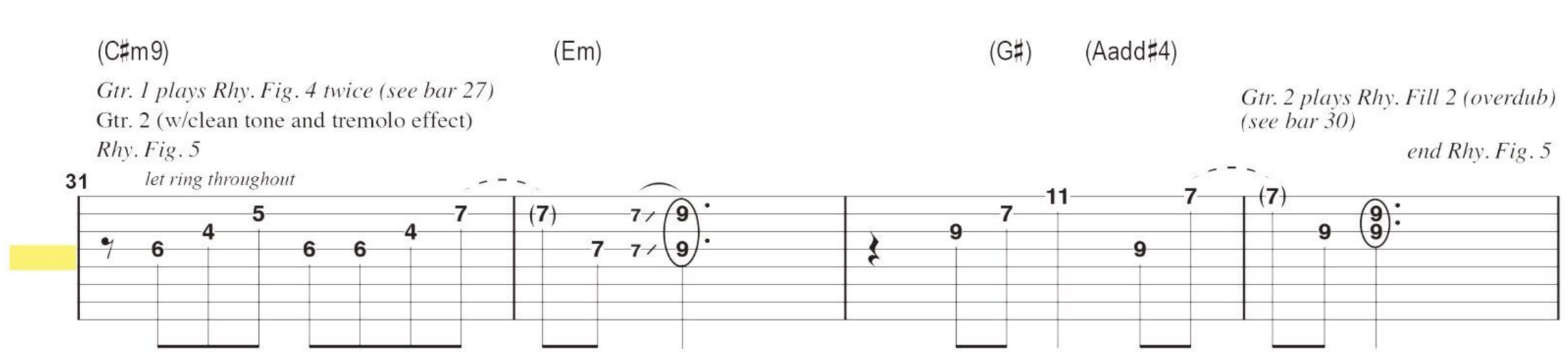
Gtr. 1 (w/clean tone)

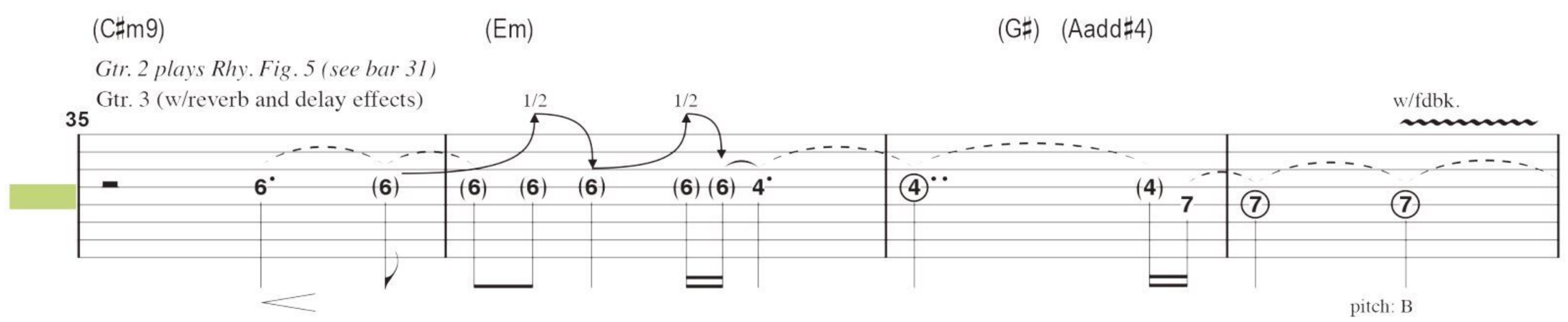
Rhy. Fig. 4

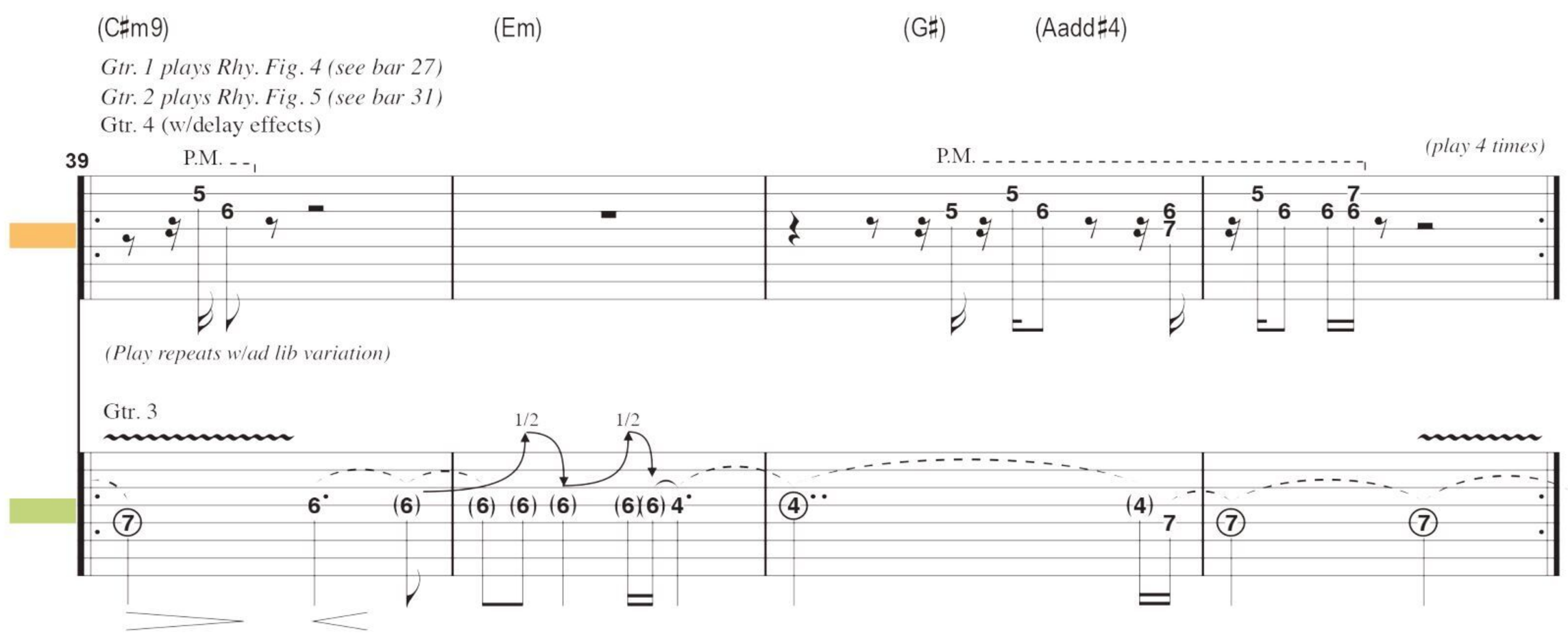
(fade in) TS TU TS TU TS TU TS TU

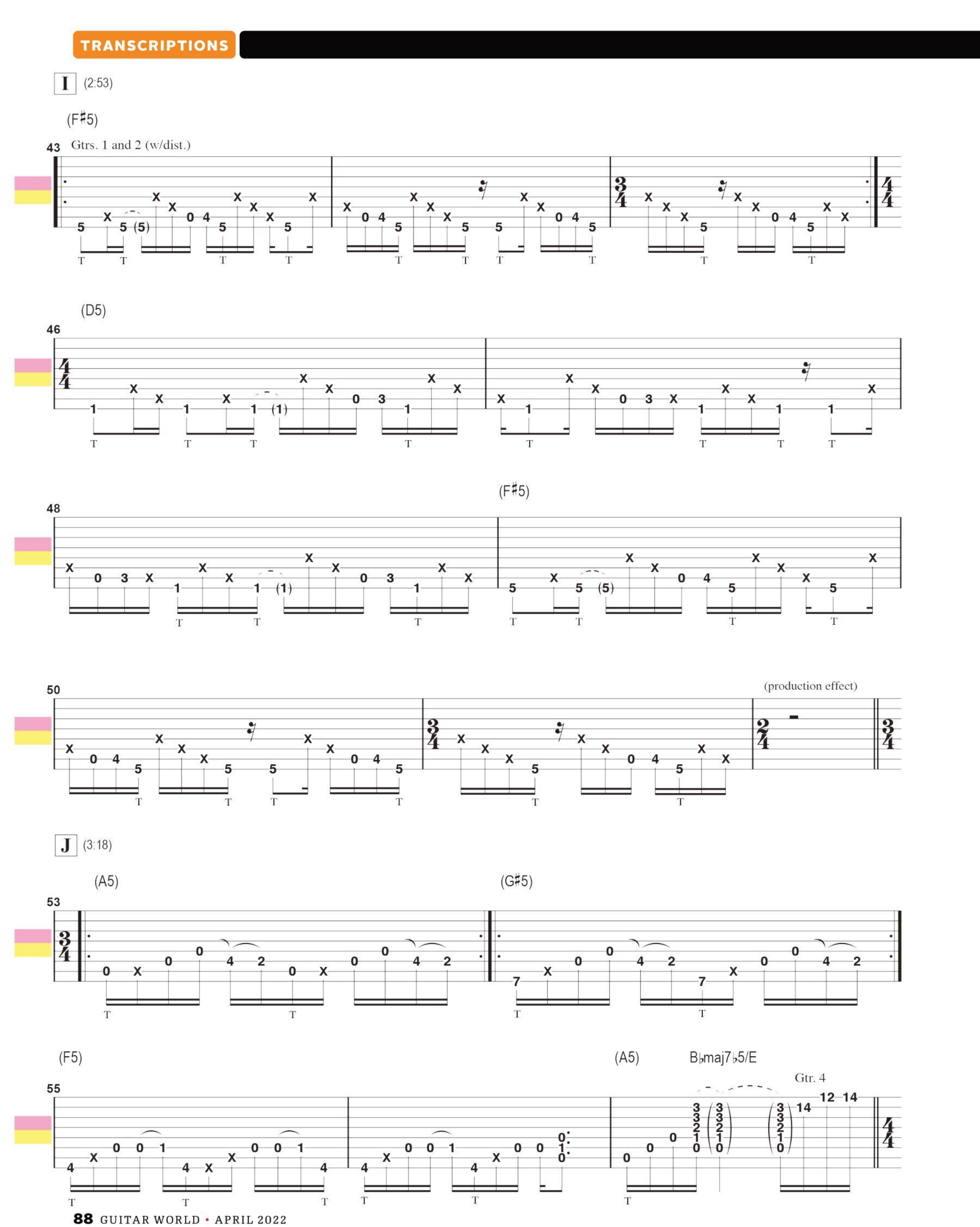
Gtr. 1 (overdub) *(first time only)*

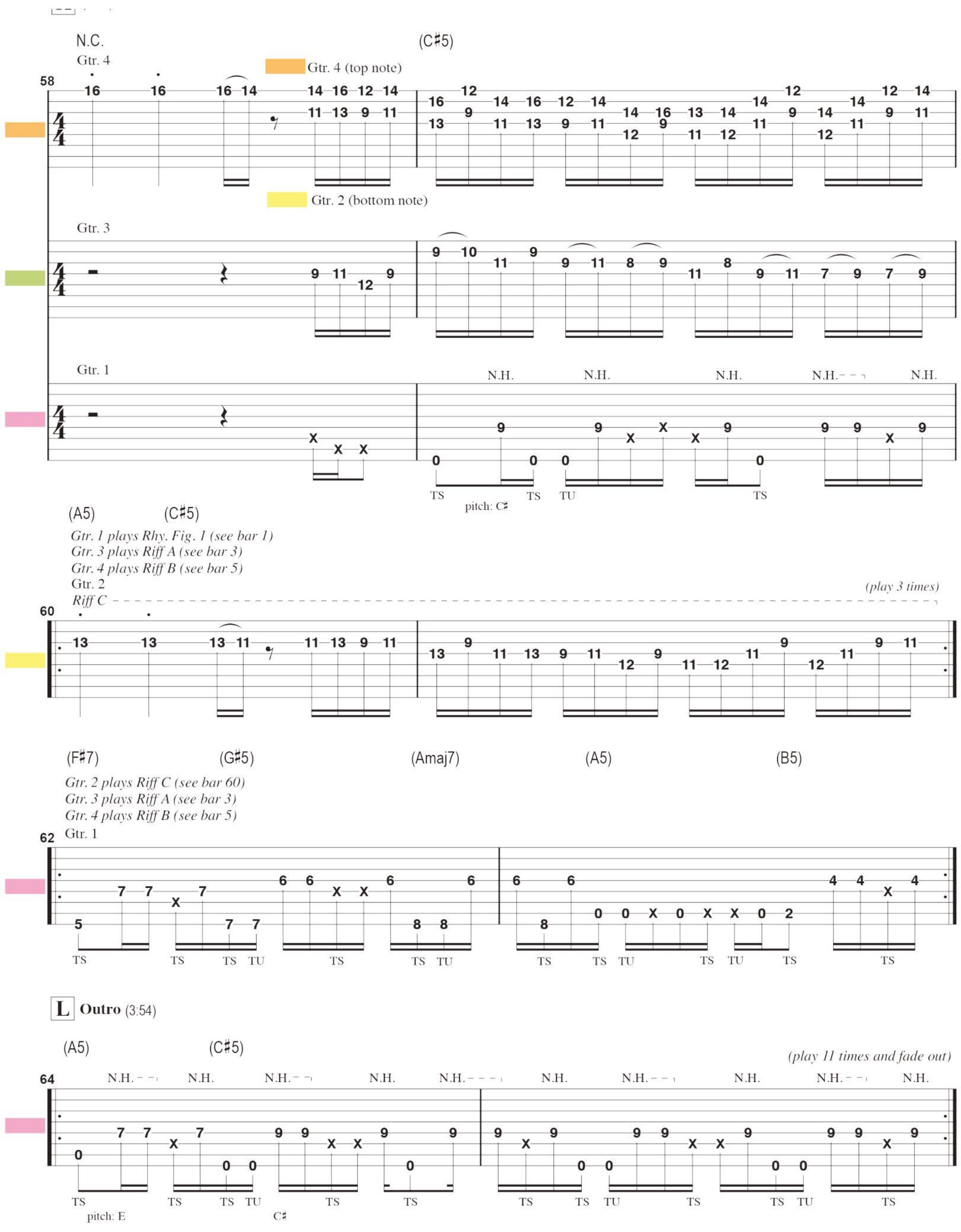

(G♯)
(Aadd♯4)
Gtr. 2
end Rhy. Fig. 4
29
TS TU
Gtr. 2 (second time only)
Rhy. Fill 2


(C♯m9)
(Em)
(G♯)
(Aadd♯4)
Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 4 twice (see bar 27)
Gtr. 2 (w/clean tone and tremolo effect)
Rhy. Fig. 5
Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fill 2 (overdub) (see bar 30)
end Rhy. Fig. 5
31
let ring throughout


(C♯m9)
(Em)
(G♯)
(Aadd♯4)
Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 5 (see bar 31)
Gtr. 3 (w/reverb and delay effects)
35
1/2
1/2
w/fdbk.
pitch: B


(C♯m9)
(Em)
(G♯)
(Aadd♯4)
Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 4 (see bar 27)
Gtr. 2 plays Rhy. Fig. 5 (see bar 31)
Gtr. 4 (w/delay effects)
39
P.M.
P.M.
(play 4 times)
(Play repeats w/ad lib variation)
Gtr. 3
1/2
1/2


I (2:53)
(F♯5)
43 Gtrs. 1 and 2 (w/dist.)
(D5)
46
(F♯5)
48
50
(production effect)
J (3:18)
(A5)
(G♯5)
53
(F5)
(A5)
B♭maj7♭5/E
Gtr. 4
55


N.C.
(C♯5)
Gtr. 4
Gtr. 4 (top note)
58
Gtr. 2 (bottom note)
Gtr. 3
Gtr. 1
N.H.
TS
TU
pitch: C♯
(A5)
(C♯5)
Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 (see bar 1)
Gtr. 3 plays Riff A (see bar 3)
Gtr. 4 plays Riff B (see bar 5)
Gtr. 2
Riff C
(play 3 times)
60
(F♯7)
(G♯5)
(Amaj7)
(A5)
(B5)
Gtr. 2 plays Riff C (see bar 60)
Gtr. 3 plays Riff A (see bar 3)
Gtr. 4 plays Riff B (see bar 5)
62
Gtr. 1
L Outro (3:54)
(A5)
(C♯5)
(play 11 times and fade out)
64
pitch: E
C♯

"BOULEVARD OF BROKEN DREAMS"

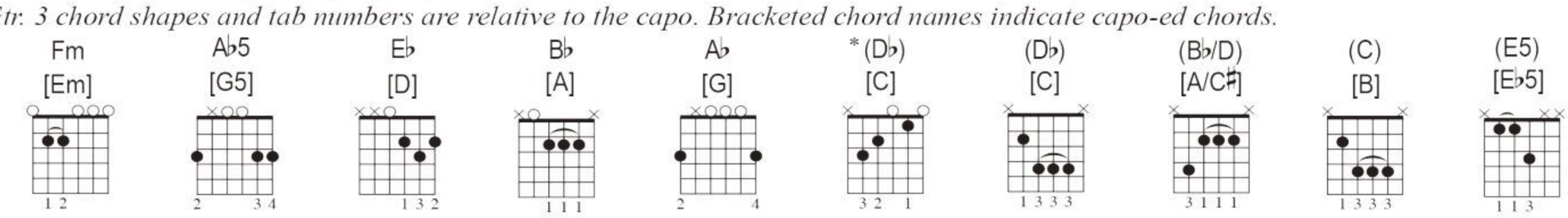
Green Day

As heard on **AMERICAN IDIOT**

Words by **BILLIE JOE** • *Music by* **GREEN DAY** • *Transcribed by* **JEFF PERRIN**

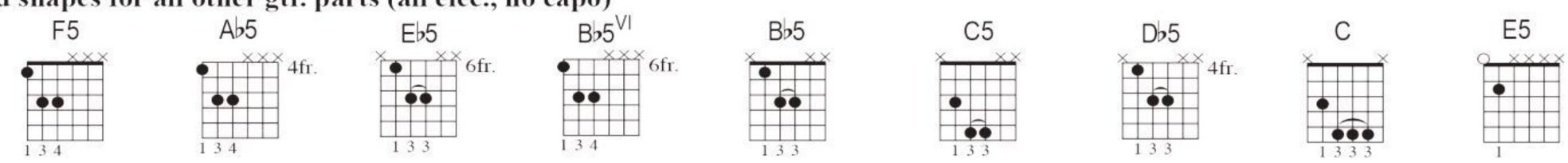
Chord shapes for Gtr. 3 (acous., capo 1)

All Gtr. 3 chord shapes and tab numbers are relative to the capo. Bracketed chord names indicate capo-ed chords.



** The last five chords in this top row weren't actually played in the recorded arrangement and are optional for an acoustic strum part. See Performance Notes.*

Chord shapes for all other gtr. parts (all elec., no capo)



A **Intro** (0:00, 1:15)

Moderately Slow ♩ = 118

(2nd time) **Ah ah ah ah Ah ah ah**

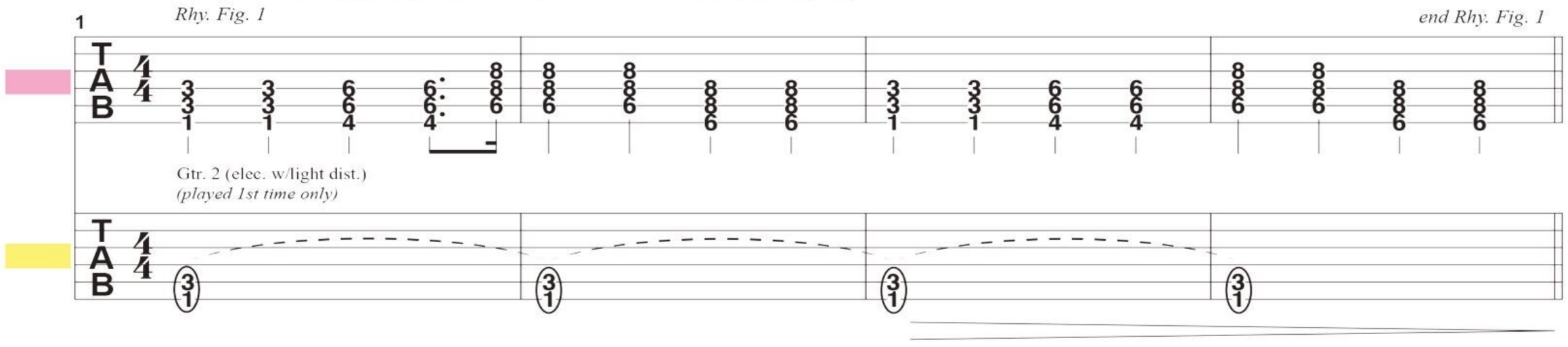
[Em] [G5] [D] [A] [Em] [G] [D] [A]

F5 A♭5 E♭5 B♭5VI F5 A♭5 E♭5 B♭5VI

Gtr. 3 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 simile 2nd time (see bar 5)

Gtr. 1 (elec. w/dist. and pulsating tremolo effect, 100% wet and set to a 16th-note rhythm)

Rhy. Fig. 1 *end Rhy. Fig. 1*



Gtr. 2 (elec. w/light dist.)

(played 1st time only)

B **1st and 2nd Verses** (0:11, 1:26)

1. I walk a lonely road The only one that I have ever known
2. I'm walkin' down the line that divides me somewhere in my mind

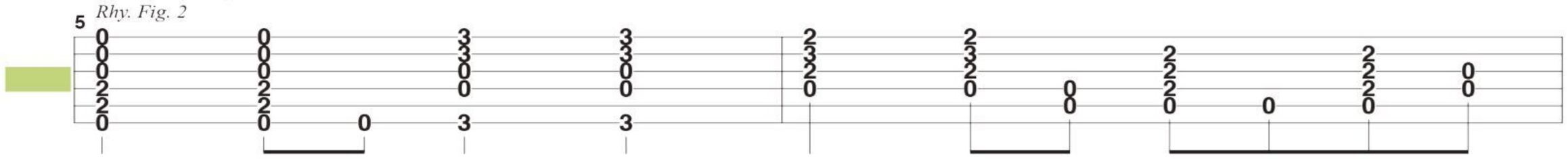
F5 A♭5 E♭5 B♭5VI

[Em] [G5] [D] [A]

Gtr. 1 plays Rhy. Fig. 1 three times simile (see bar 1)

Gtr. 3 (acous., capo 1)

Rhy. Fig. 2



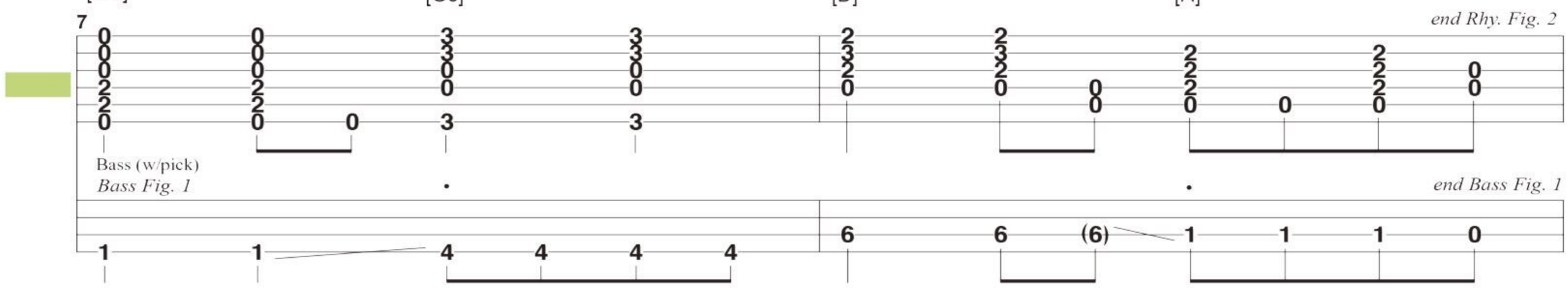
Don't know where it goes But it's home to me and I walk alone

On the border line of the edge and where I walk alone

F5 A♭5 E♭5 B♭5VI

[Em] [G5] [D] [A]

end Rhy. Fig. 2



Bass (w/pick)

Bass Fig. 1 *end Bass Fig. 1*

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I walk this empty street on the Boulevard of Broken Dreams
Read between the lines What's fucked up and everything's alright

[Em] F5 [G] A♭5 [D] E♭5 [A] B♭5 [Em] F5 [G] A♭5 [D] E♭5 [A] B♭5

Gtr. 3 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 twice (see bar 5)
* Gtrs. 4 and 5 (both elec. w/clean tone)

Riff A

9

** Gtr. 4 plays higher notes; Gtr. 5 plays lower notes.*
Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 four times (see bar 7)

Where the city sleeps and I'm the only one and I walk alone
Check my vital signs to know I'm still alive and I walk alone
I walk alone I walk alone
I walk alone I walk alone

[Em] F5 [G] A♭5 [D] E♭5 [A] B♭5 [Em] F5 [G] A♭5 [D] E♭5 [A] B♭5

13

C Chorus (0:52, 2:06, 3:18)

I walk alone and I walk a
I walk alone I walk a
My shadow's the only one that walks beside me

[Em] F5 [G] A♭5 [D] E♭5 [A] B♭5 [B] C5 [C] D♭5 [G5] A♭5 [D] E♭5 [Em] F5

Gtr. 3 plays first two bars of Rhy. Fig. 2 (see bar 5)
Gtrs. 4 and 5 play Riff A (see bar 9)
Gtr. 1
Gtrs. 1 and 2 (tremolo effect off)
(composite arrangement)
Rhy. Fig. 3

17

Bass Fig. 2 *Bass Fig. 3*

My shallow heart's the only thing that's beating Sometimes I wish

[C] D♭5 [G5] A♭5 [D] E♭5 [Em] F5 [C] D♭5 [G5] A♭5

Gtrs. 4 and 5 play Riff B third time (see bar 31)
end Rhy. Fig. 3

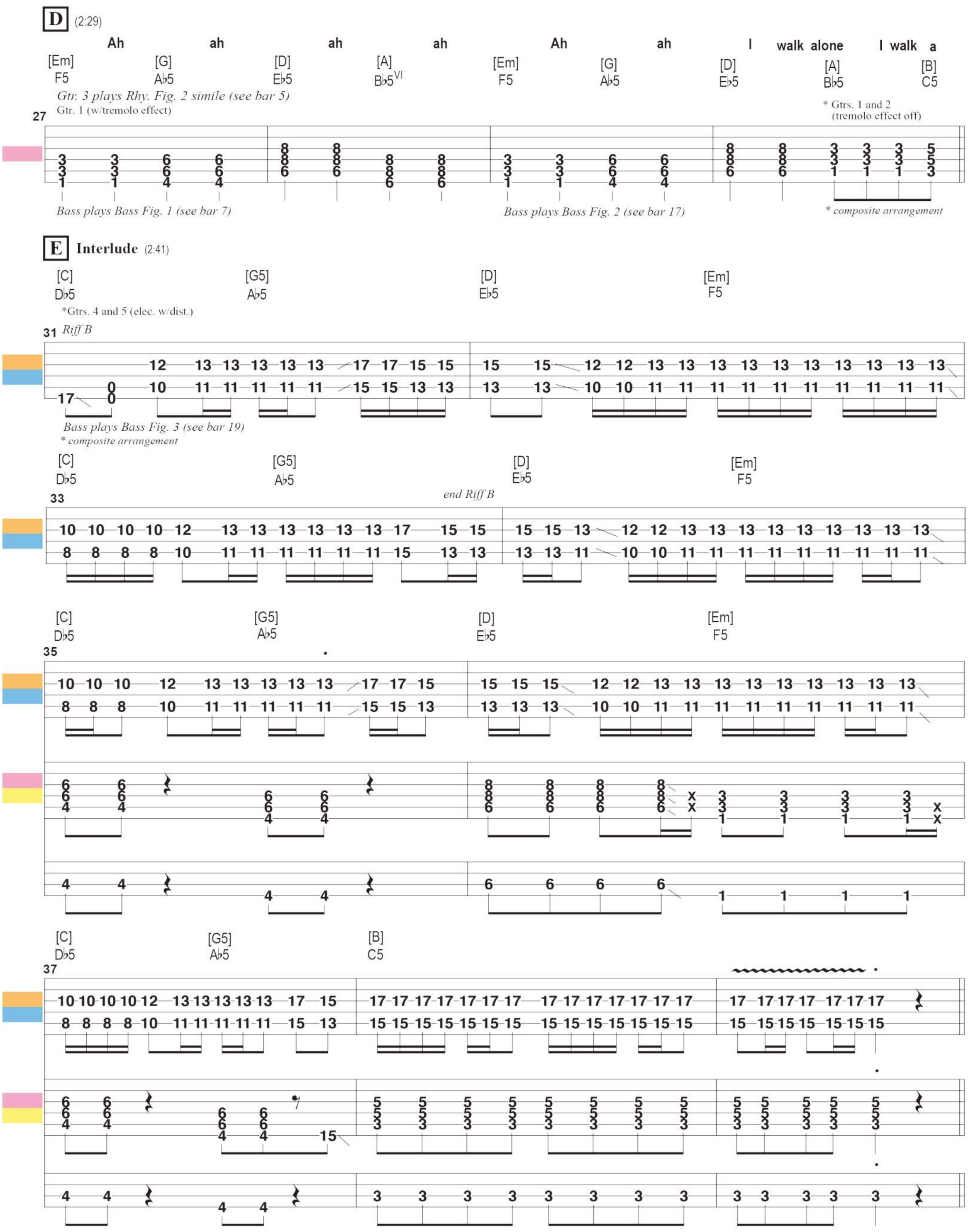
21

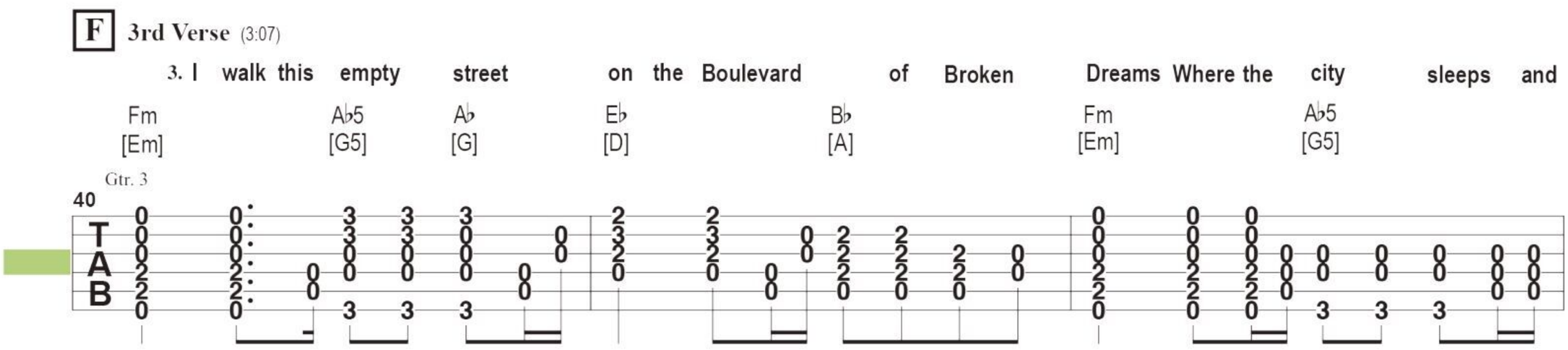
1st time, go back to A **Intro** *(bar 1)*
3rd time, skip ahead to G *(bar 44)*
2nd time, continue to D *(bar 27)*

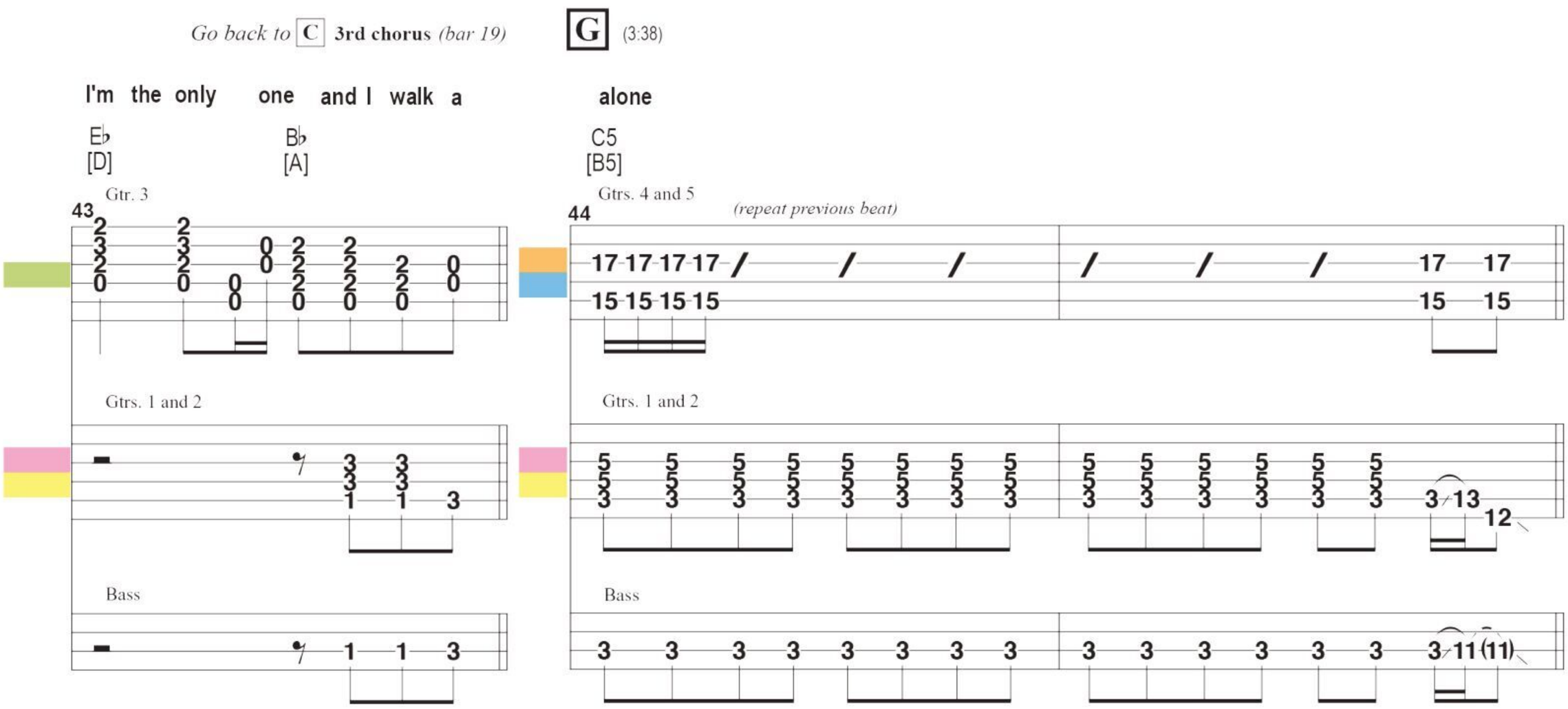
someone out there will find me 'Til then I walk alone

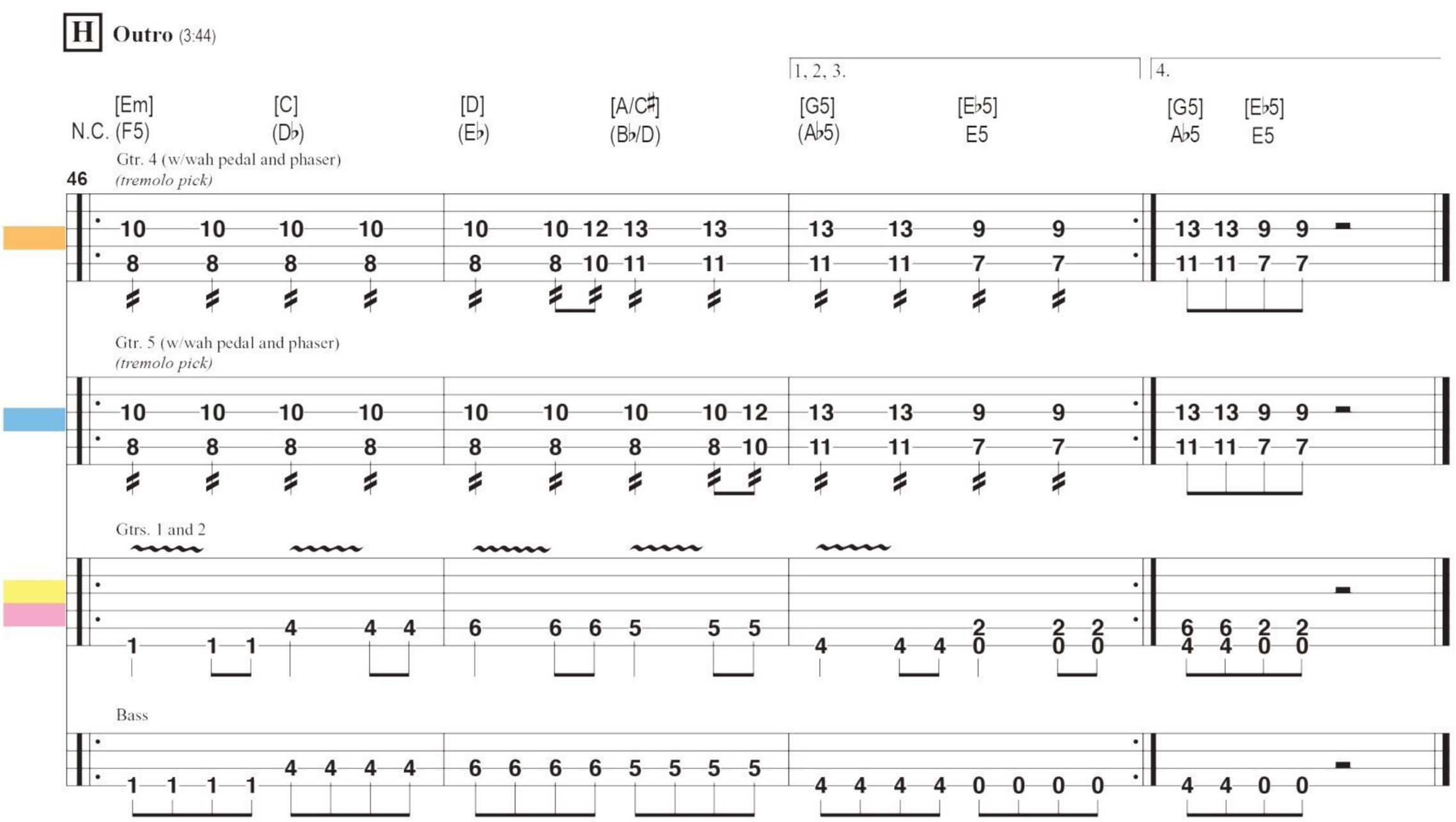
[D] E♭5 [Em] F5 [C] D♭5 [G5] A♭5 [B] C5 C

24


D (2:29)
Ah ah ah ah Ah ah I walk alone I walk a
[Em] F5 [G] A♭5 [D] E♭5 [A] B♭5 VI [Em] F5 [G] A♭5 [D] E♭5 [A] B♭5 [B] C5
Gtr. 3 plays Rhy. Fig. 2 simile (see bar 5)
27
Gtr. 1 (w/tremolo effect)
* Gtrs. 1 and 2 (tremolo effect off)
Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 7)
Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 (see bar 17)
* composite arrangement
E Interlude (2:41)
[C] D♭5 [G5] A♭5 [D] E♭5 [Em] F5
*Gtrs. 4 and 5 (elec. w/dist.)
31
Riff B
Bass plays Bass Fig. 3 (see bar 19)
* composite arrangement
[C] D♭5 [G5] A♭5 [D] E♭5 [Em] F5
33
end Riff B
[C] D♭5 [G5] A♭5 [D] E♭5 [Em] F5
35
[C] D♭5 [G5] A♭5 [B] C5
37


F 3rd Verse (3:07)
3. I walk this empty street on the Boulevard of Broken Dreams Where the city sleeps and
Fm [Em]
A♭5 [G5]
A♭ [G]
E♭ [D]
B♭ [A]
Fm [Em]
A♭5 [G5]
Gtr. 3
40
TAB


Go back to C 3rd chorus (bar 19)
G (3:38)
I'm the only one and I walk a alone
E♭ [D]
B♭ [A]
C5 [B5]
Gtr. 3
43
Gtrs. 4 and 5
44
(repeat previous beat)
Gtrs. 1 and 2
Bass


H Outro (3:44)
1, 2, 3.
4.
[Em] N.C. (F5)
[C] (D♭)
[D] (E♭)
[A/C♯] (B♭/D)
[G5] (A♭5)
[E♭5] E5
[G5] A♭5
[E♭5] E5
Gtr. 4 (w/wah pedal and phaser)
(tremolo pick)
46
Gtr. 5 (w/wah pedal and phaser)
(tremolo pick)
Gtrs. 1 and 2
Bass

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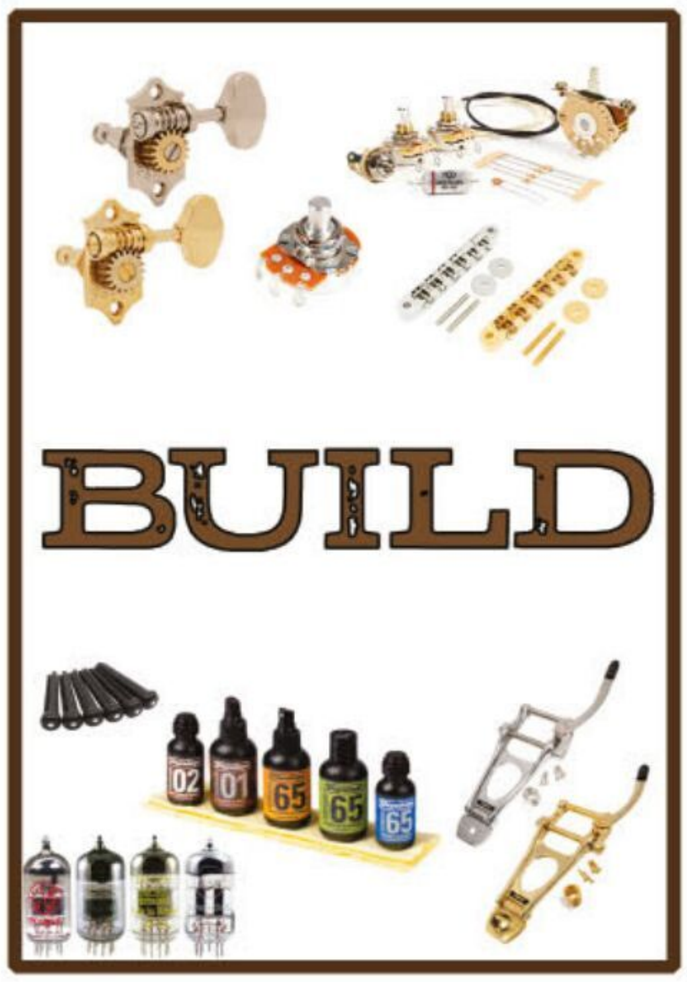

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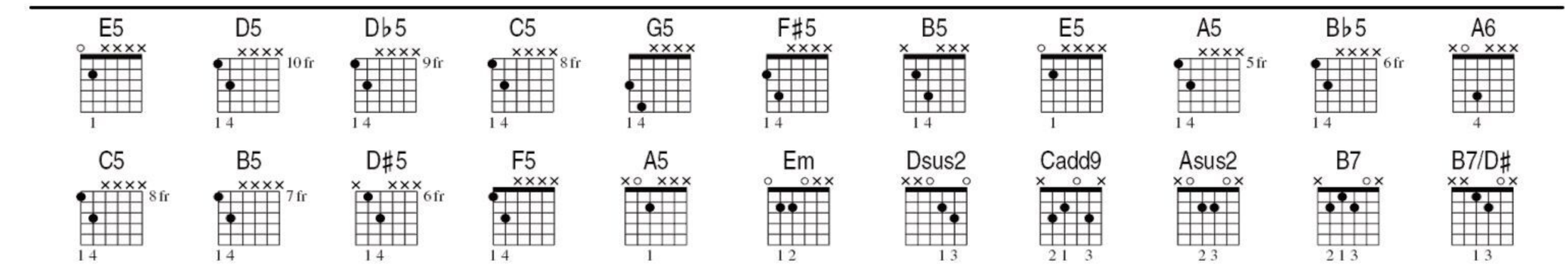
"MASTER OF PUPPETS"

Metallica

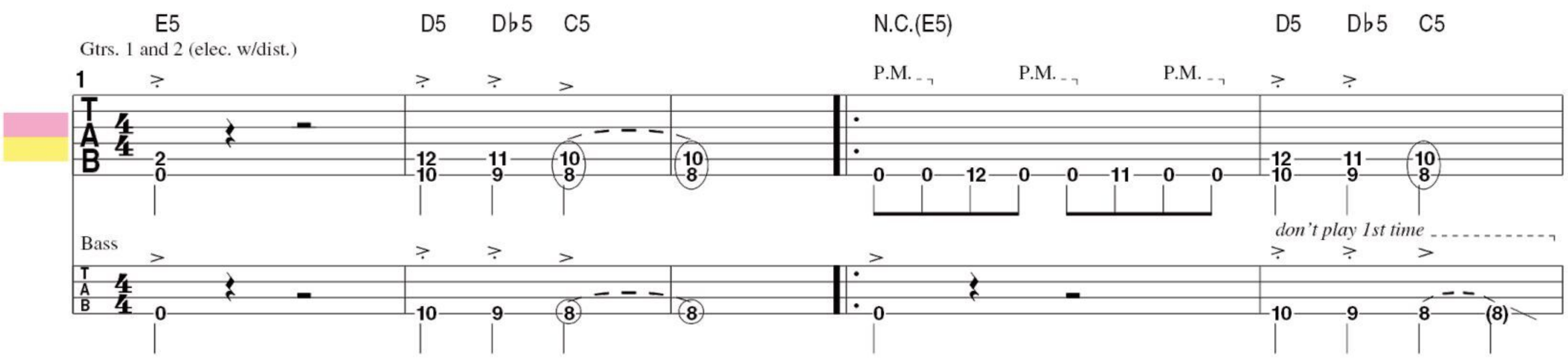
As heard on **MASTER OF PUPPETS**

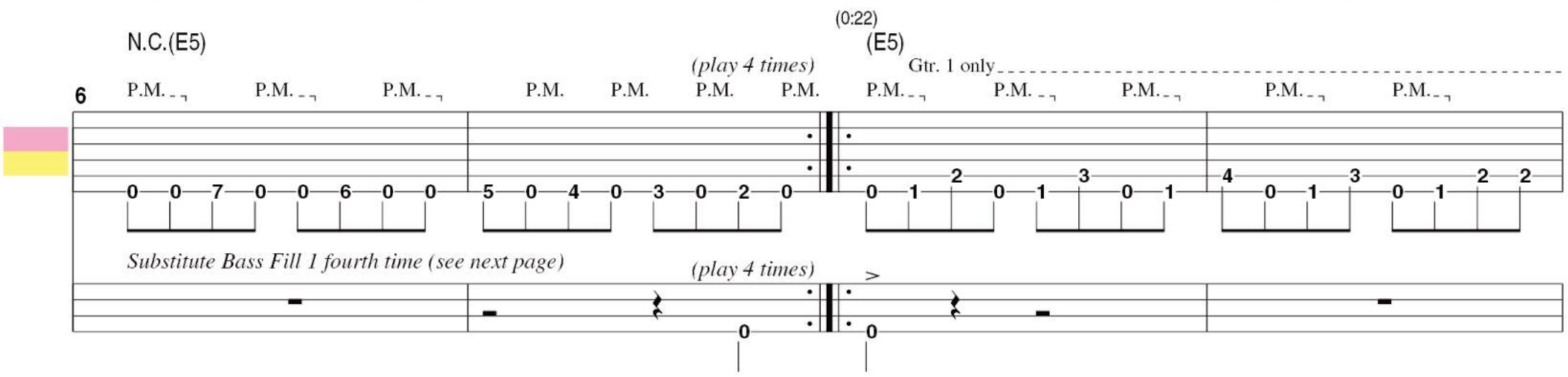
Words and Music by **JAMES HETFIELD, LARS ULRICH, KIRK HAMMETT** *and* **CLIFF BURTON** • *Transcribed by* **ANDY ALEDORT**

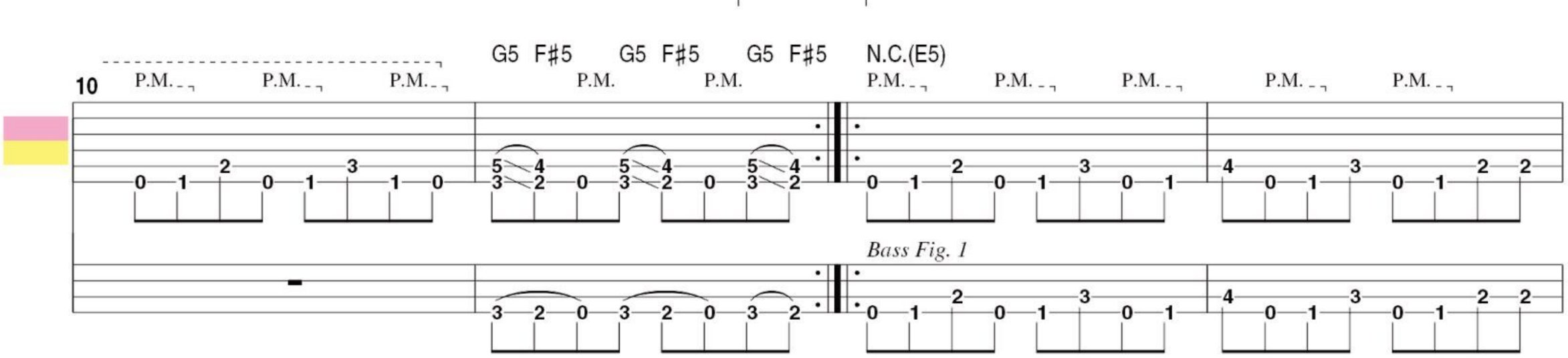


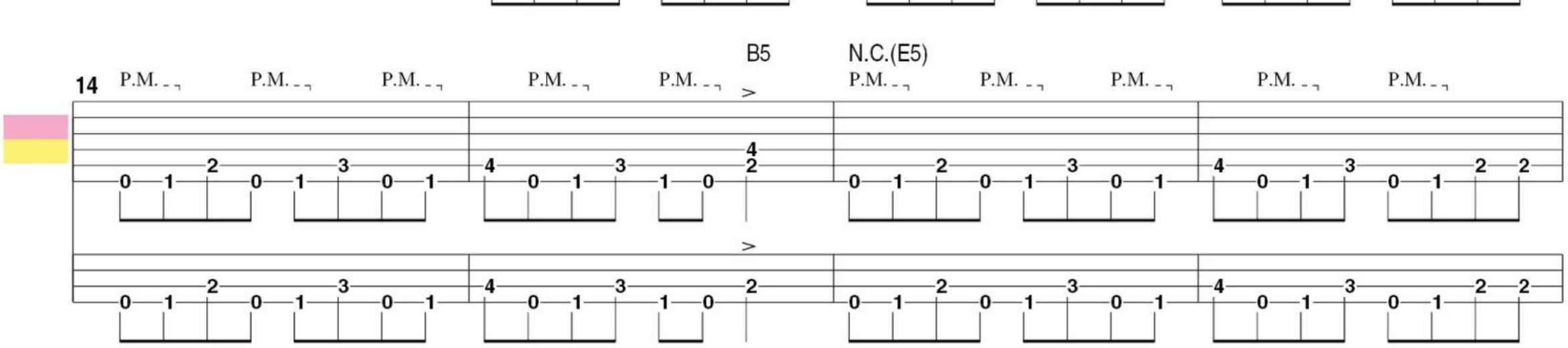
A **Intro** (0:00)

Fast ♩ = 215









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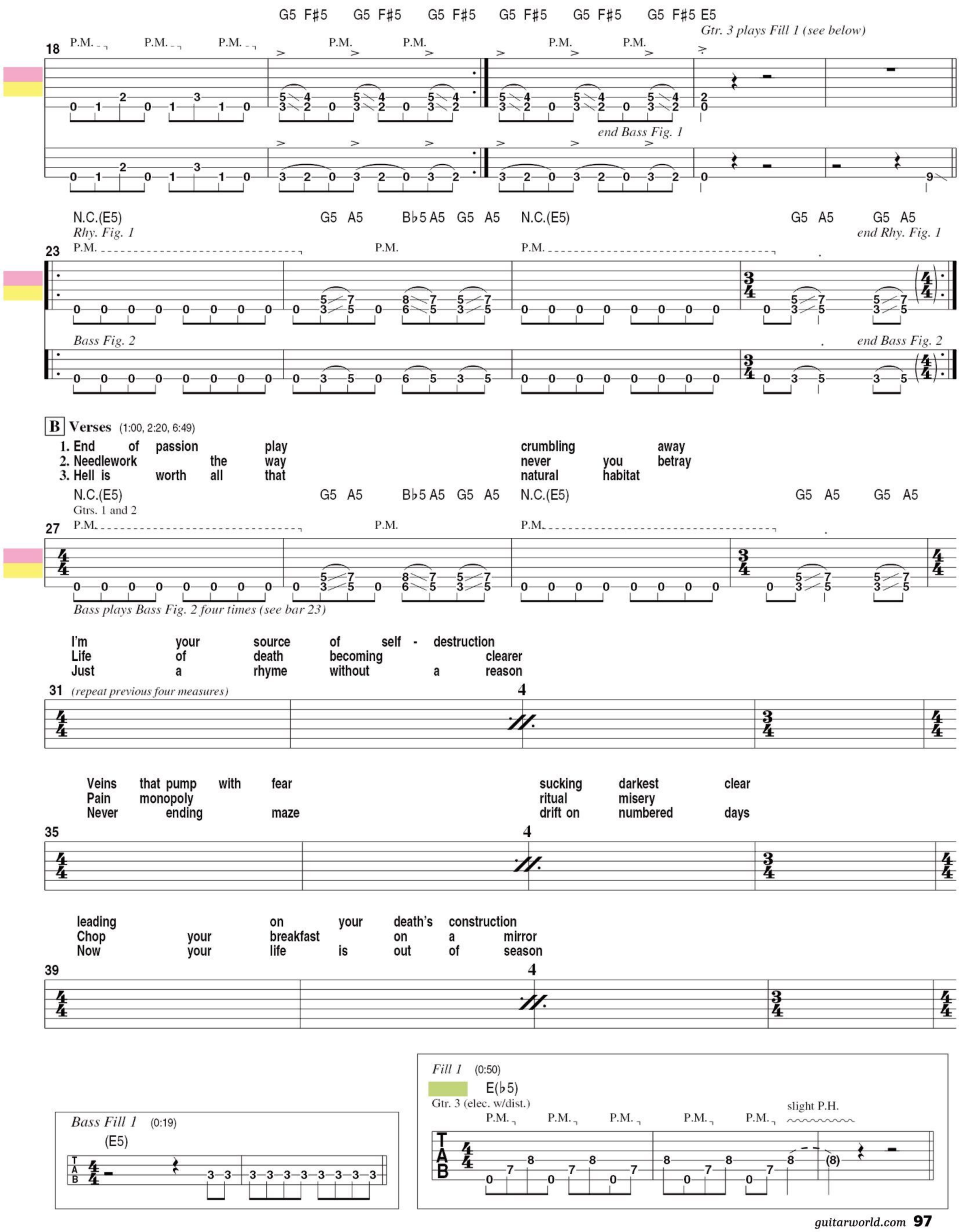

G5 F♯5 G5 F♯5 G5 F♯5 G5 F♯5 G5 F♯5 G5 F♯5 E5
Gtr. 3 plays Fill 1 (see below)
18
P.M.
end Bass Fig. 1
N.C.(E5)
Rhy. Fig. 1
G5 A5 B♭5 A5 G5 A5 N.C.(E5)
G5 A5 G5 A5
end Rhy. Fig. 1
23
Bass Fig. 2
end Bass Fig. 2
B Verses (1:00, 2:20, 6:49)
1. End of passion play crumbling away
2. Needlework the way never you betray
3. Hell is worth all that natural habitat
N.C.(E5) G5 A5 B♭5 A5 G5 A5 N.C.(E5) G5 A5 G5 A5
Gtrs. 1 and 2
27
Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 four times (see bar 23)
I'm your source of self - destruction
Life of death becoming clearer
Just a rhyme without a reason
31 (repeat previous four measures)
Veins that pump with fear sucking darkest clear
Pain monopoly ritual misery
Never ending maze drift on numbered days
35
leading on your death's construction
Chop your breakfast on a mirror
Now your life is out of season
39
Bass Fill 1 (0:19)
(E5)
Fill 1 (0:50)
E(♭5)
Gtr. 3 (elec. w/dist.)
slight P.H.

1., 2. Taste me you will see more is all you need
3. I will occupy I will help you die

N.C.(F♯5) A6 B5 C5 B5 A6 B5 N.C.(F♯5)

Rhy. Fig. 2

Gtrs. 1 and 2

43 P.M. P.M.

Bass

Bass Fig. 3

Dedicated to
I will run through you

A6 B5 A6 B5 N.C.(F♯5) A6 B5 C5 B5 A6 B5

46 P.M.

how I'm killing you
Now I rule you too

N.C.(F♯5) A6 B5 A6 B5 N.C.(B5)

end Rhy. Fig. 2

49 P.M. P.M.

end Bass Fig. 3

C **Pre-chorus** (1:27, 2:47, 7:15)
w/half-time feel

1., 2., 3.

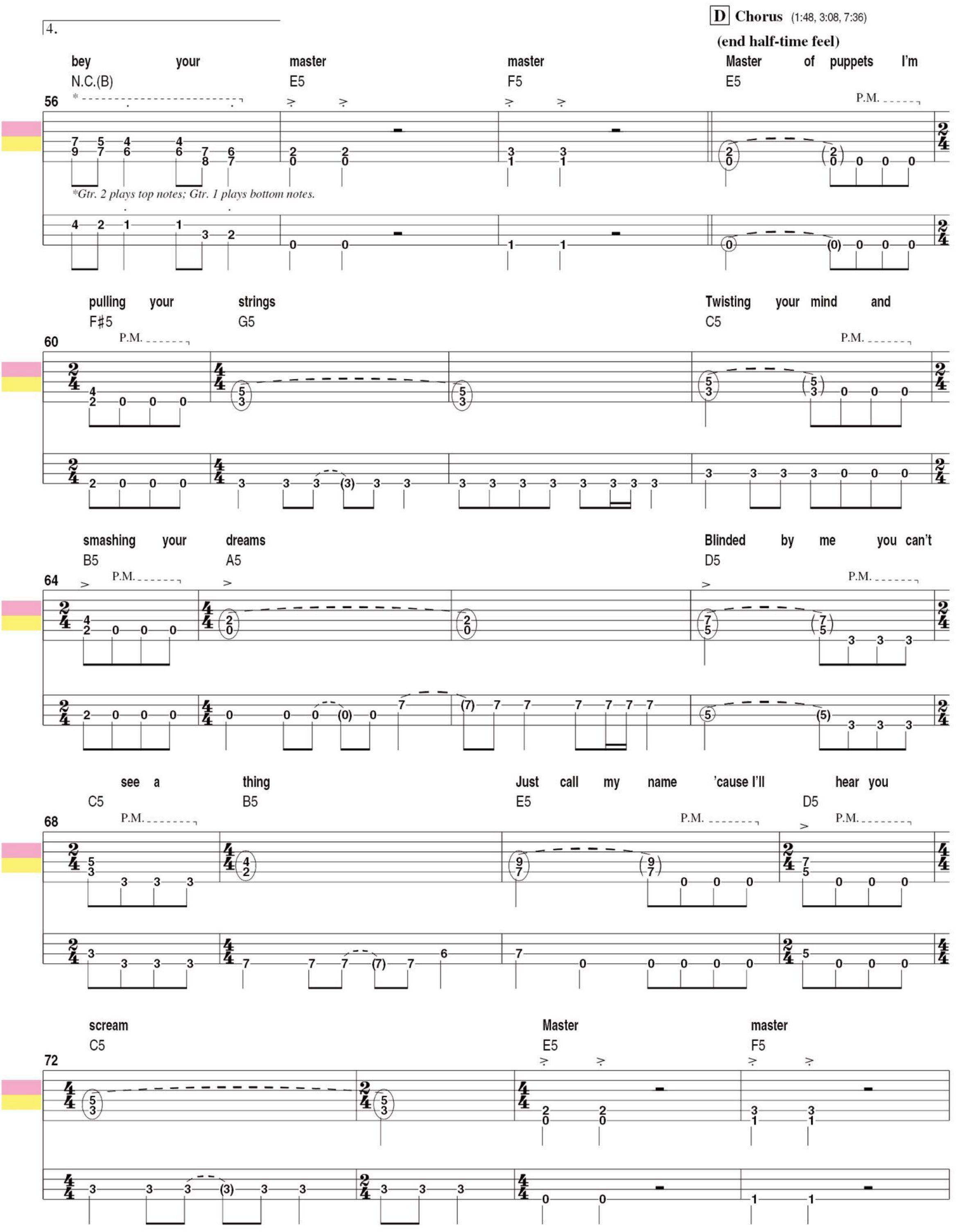
(1.) Come crawling
Obey
Your life your
O - burns

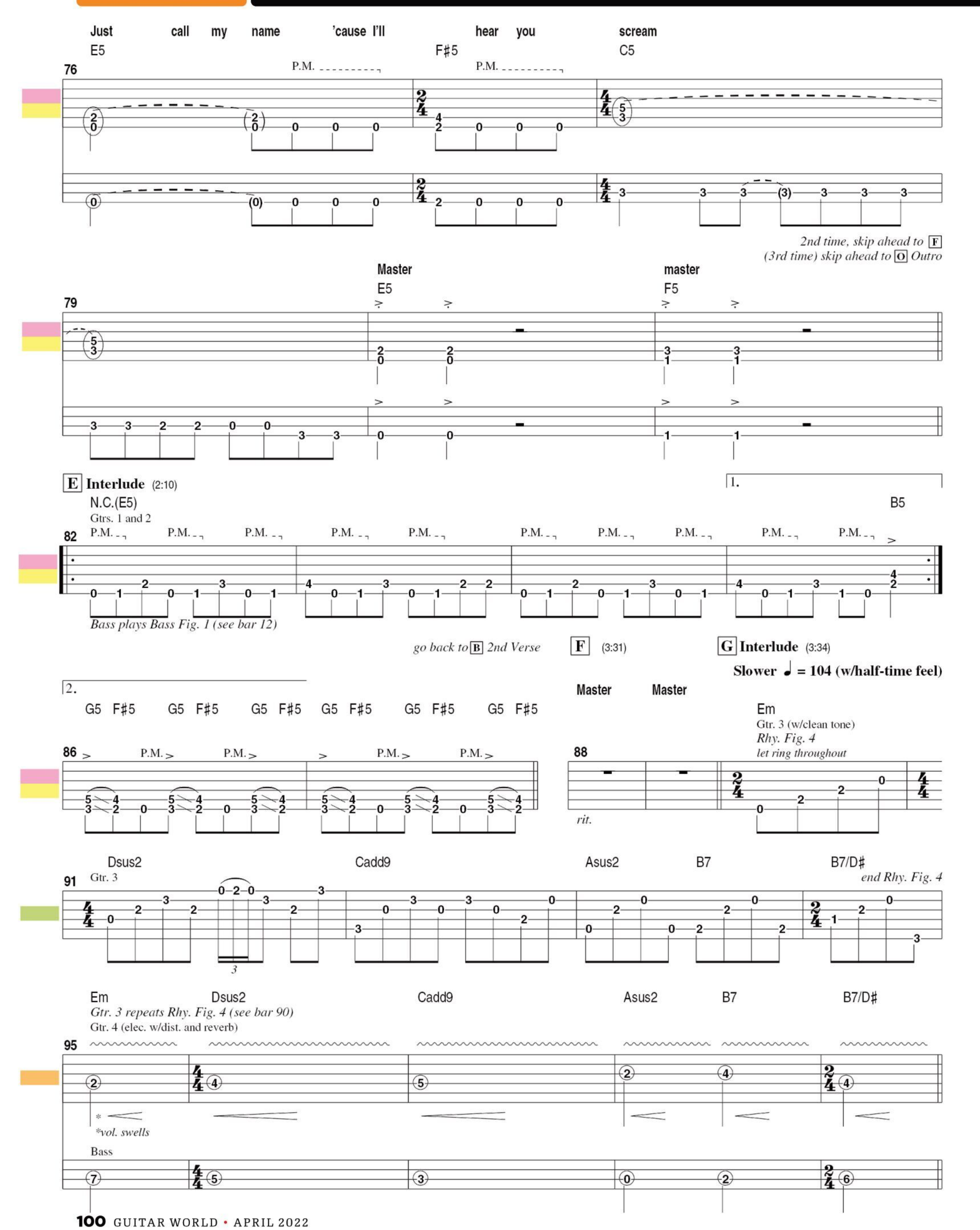
(2.) faster
(3.) master
(4.) faster

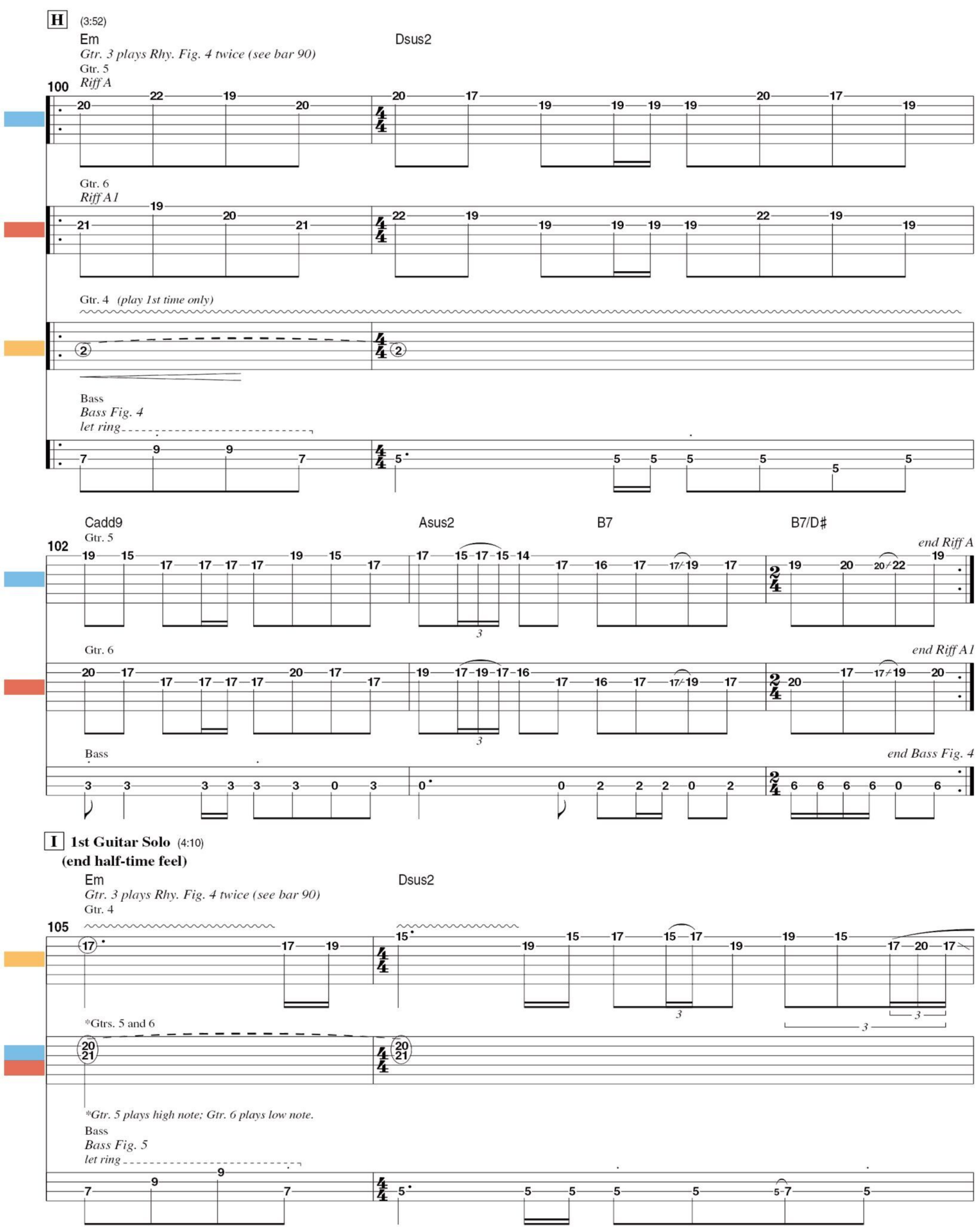
E5 D5 E5 N.C. C5 B5 (C5) D♯5 B5

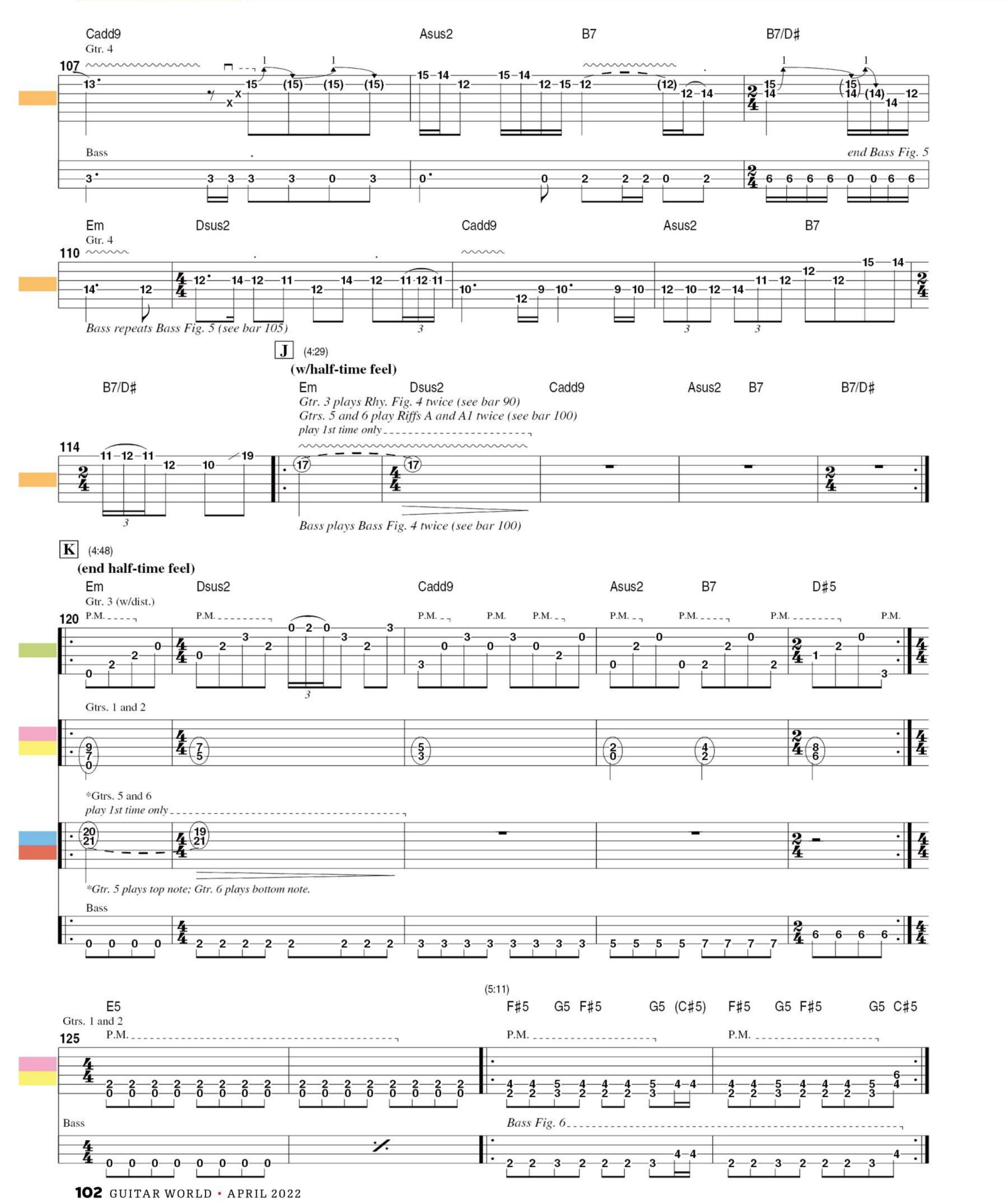
Rhy. Fig. 3 *end Rhy. Fig. 3*

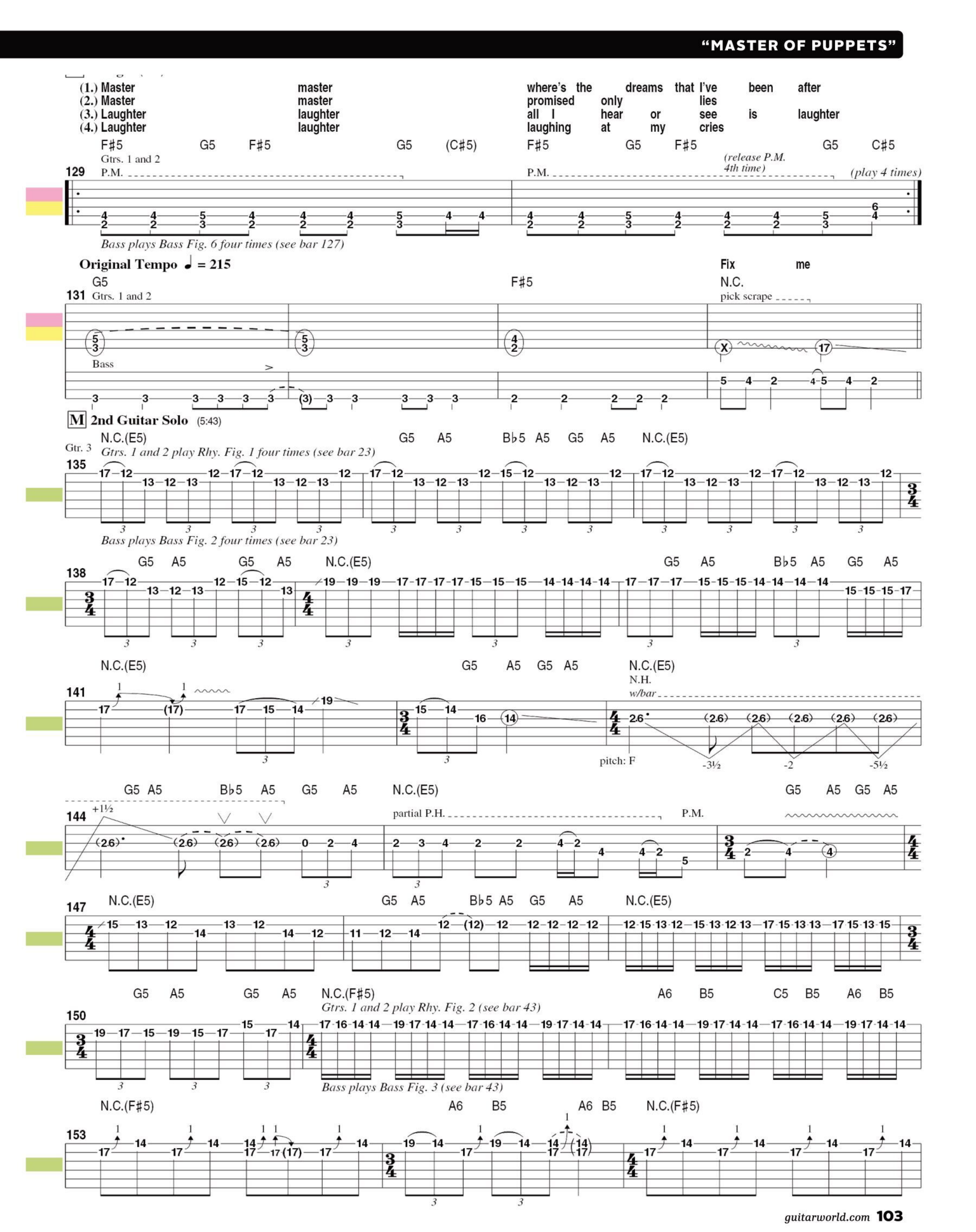
52 P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M.

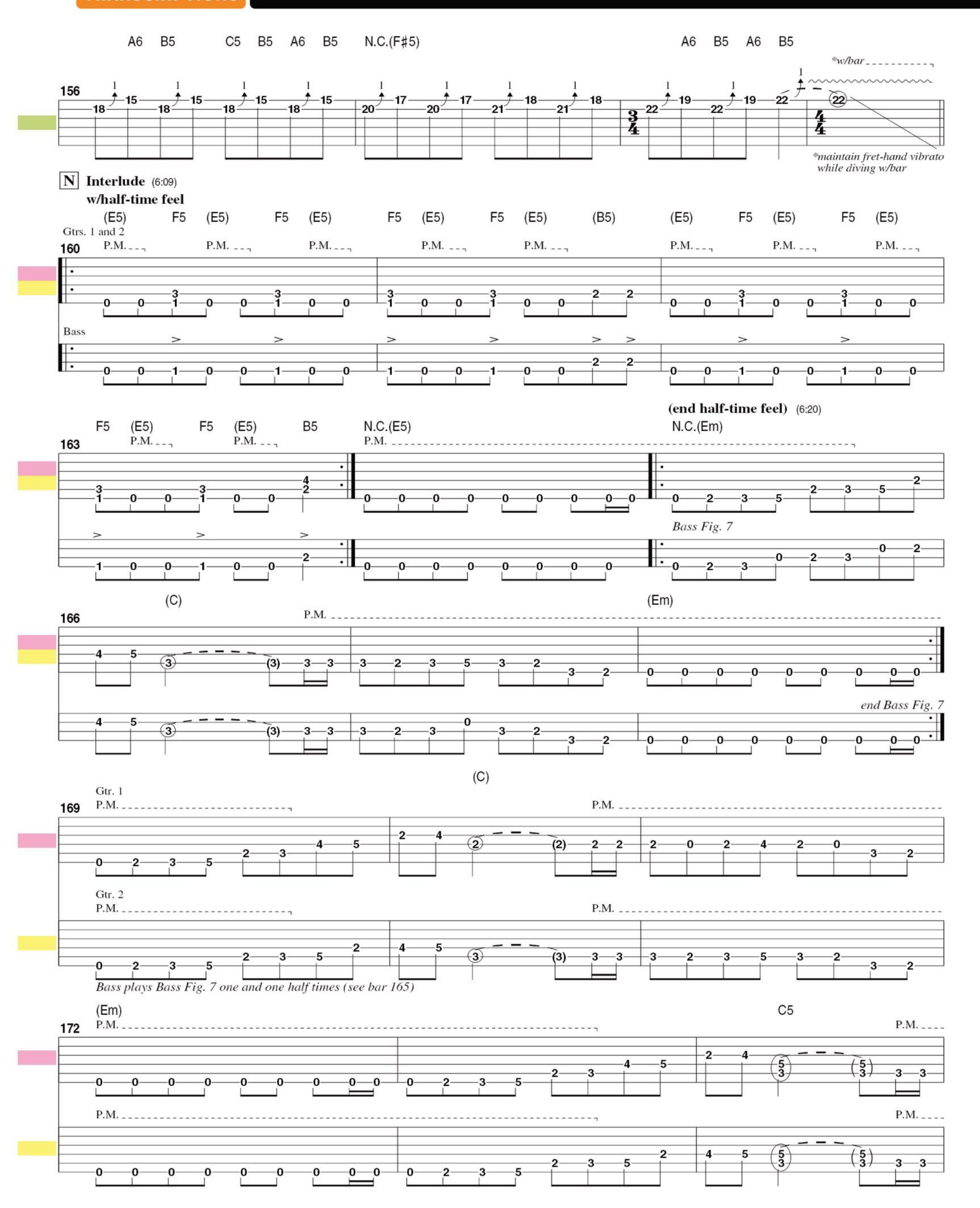

D Chorus (1:48, 3:08, 7:36)
(end half-time feel)
4.
bey your master master Master of puppets I'm
N.C.(B) E5 F5 E5
56
P.M.
*Gtr. 2 plays top notes; Gtr. 1 plays bottom notes.
pulling your strings Twisting your mind and
F♯5 G5 C5
60
P.M.
smashing your dreams Blinded by me you can't
B5 A5 D5
64
P.M.
see a thing Just call my name 'cause I'll hear you
C5 B5 E5 D5
68
P.M.
scream Master master
C5 E5 F5
72

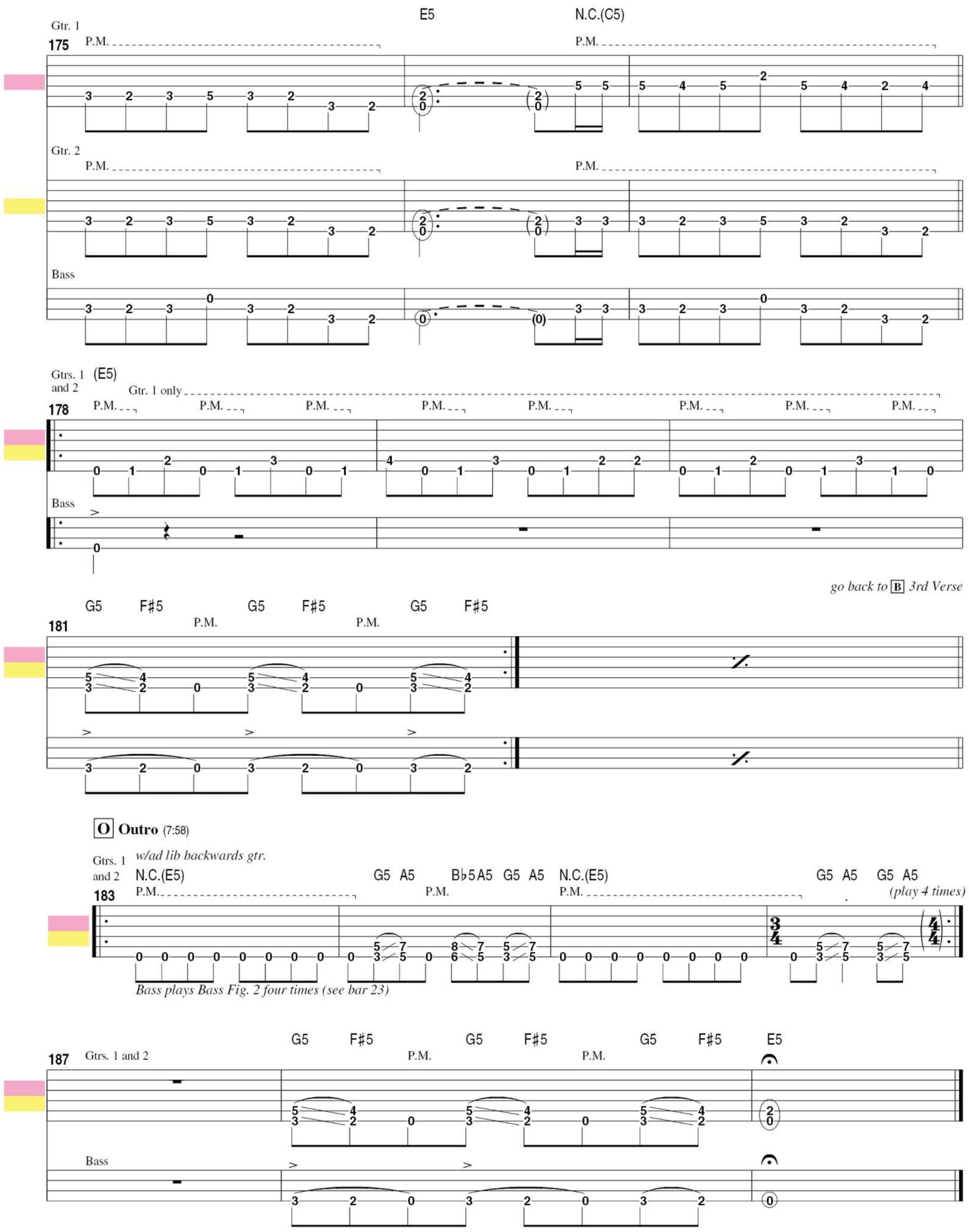

Just call my name 'cause I'll hear you scream
E5
F♯5
C5
76
P.M.
2nd time, skip ahead to F
(3rd time) skip ahead to O Outro
Master
E5
master
F5
79
E Interlude (2:10)
N.C.(E5)
Gtrs. 1 and 2
1.
B5
82
Bass plays Bass Fig. 1 (see bar 12)
go back to B 2nd Verse
F (3:31)
G Interlude (3:34)
Slower ♩ = 104 (w/half-time feel)
2.
G5 F♯5 G5 F♯5 G5 F♯5 G5 F♯5 G5 F♯5 G5 F♯5
Master
Master
Em
Gtr. 3 (w/clean tone)
Rhy. Fig. 4
let ring throughout
86
88
rit.
Dsus2
Cadd9
Asus2
B7
B7/D♯
91
Gtr. 3
end Rhy. Fig. 4
Em
Dsus2
Cadd9
Asus2
B7
B7/D♯
Gtr. 3 repeats Rhy. Fig. 4 (see bar 90)
Gtr. 4 (elec. w/dist. and reverb)
95
*vol. swells
Bass


H (3:52)
Em
Dsus2
Gtr. 3 plays Rhy. Fig. 4 twice (see bar 90)
Gtr. 5
Riff A
100
Gtr. 6
Riff A1
Gtr. 4 (play 1st time only)
Bass
Bass Fig. 4
let ring
Cadd9
Asus2
B7
B7/D♯
102
Gtr. 5
end Riff A
Gtr. 6
end Riff A1
Bass
end Bass Fig. 4
I 1st Guitar Solo (4:10)
(end half-time feel)
Em
Dsus2
Gtr. 3 plays Rhy. Fig. 4 twice (see bar 90)
Gtr. 4
105
*Gtrs. 5 and 6
*Gtr. 5 plays high note; Gtr. 6 plays low note.
Bass
Bass Fig. 5
let ring


Cadd9
Asus2
B7
B7/D♯
Gtr. 4
107
Bass
end Bass Fig. 5
Em
Dsus2
Cadd9
Asus2
B7
Gtr. 4
110
Bass repeats Bass Fig. 5 (see bar 105)
J (4:29)
(w/half-time feel)
B7/D♯
Em
Dsus2
Cadd9
Asus2
B7
B7/D♯
Gtr. 3 plays Rhy. Fig. 4 twice (see bar 90)
Gtrs. 5 and 6 play Riffs A and A1 twice (see bar 100)
play 1st time only
114
Bass plays Bass Fig. 4 twice (see bar 100)
K (4:48)
(end half-time feel)
Em
Dsus2
Cadd9
Asus2
B7
D♯5
Gtr. 3 (w/dist.)
120
P.M.
Gtrs. 1 and 2
*Gtrs. 5 and 6
play 1st time only
*Gtr. 5 plays top note; Gtr. 6 plays bottom note.
Bass
(5:11)
E5
F♯5
G5
F♯5
G5
(C♯5)
F♯5
G5
F♯5
G5
C♯5
Gtrs. 1 and 2
125
P.M.
Bass
Bass Fig. 6


(1.) Master master where's the dreams that I've been after
(2.) Master master promised only lies
(3.) Laughter laughter all I hear or see is laughter
(4.) Laughter laughter laughing at my cries
F♯5 G5 F♯5 G5 (C♯5) F♯5 G5 F♯5 G5 C♯5
Gtrs. 1 and 2
129 P.M.
(release P.M. 4th time)
(play 4 times)
Bass plays Bass Fig. 6 four times (see bar 127)
Original Tempo ♩ = 215
Fix me
G5 F♯5 N.C.
131 Gtrs. 1 and 2
pick scrape
Bass
M 2nd Guitar Solo (5:43)
N.C.(E5) G5 A5 B♭5 A5 G5 A5 N.C.(E5)
Gtr. 3
Gtrs. 1 and 2 play Rhy. Fig. 1 four times (see bar 23)
135
Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 four times (see bar 23)
138
N.C.(E5) G5 A5 G5 A5 N.C.(E5) G5 A5 B♭5 A5 G5 A5
141
N.C.(E5) G5 A5 G5 A5 N.C.(E5)
N.H.
w/bar
pitch: F
-3½ -2 -5½
144
+1½
partial P.H.
P.M.
147
N.C.(E5) G5 A5 B♭5 A5 G5 A5 N.C.(E5)
150
G5 A5 G5 A5 N.C.(F♯5) A6 B5 C5 B5 A6 B5
Gtrs. 1 and 2 play Rhy. Fig. 2 (see bar 43)
Bass plays Bass Fig. 3 (see bar 43)
153
N.C.(F♯5) A6 B5 A6 B5 N.C.(F♯5)


A6 B5 C5 B5 A6 B5 N.C.(F#5) A6 B5 A6 B5
*w/bar
156
*maintain fret-hand vibrato while diving w/bar
N Interlude (6:09)
w/half-time feel
(E5) F5 (E5) F5 (E5) F5 (E5) F5 (E5) (B5) (E5) F5 (E5) F5 (E5)
Gtrs. 1 and 2
160
P.M.
Bass
(end half-time feel) (6:20)
F5 (E5) F5 (E5) B5 N.C.(E5) N.C.(Em)
163
Bass Fig. 7
(C) (Em)
166
end Bass Fig. 7
(C)
Gtr. 1
169
Gtr. 2
Bass plays Bass Fig. 7 one and one half times (see bar 165)
(Em) C5
172


E5
N.C.(C5)
Gtr. 1
175
P.M.
Gtr. 2
Bass
Gtrs. 1 and 2
(E5)
Gtr. 1 only
178
go back to B 3rd Verse
G5
F♯5
181
O Outro (7:58)
w/ad lib backwards gtr.
N.C.(E5)
B♭5
A5
183
(play 4 times)
Bass plays Bass Fig. 2 four times (see bar 23)
187

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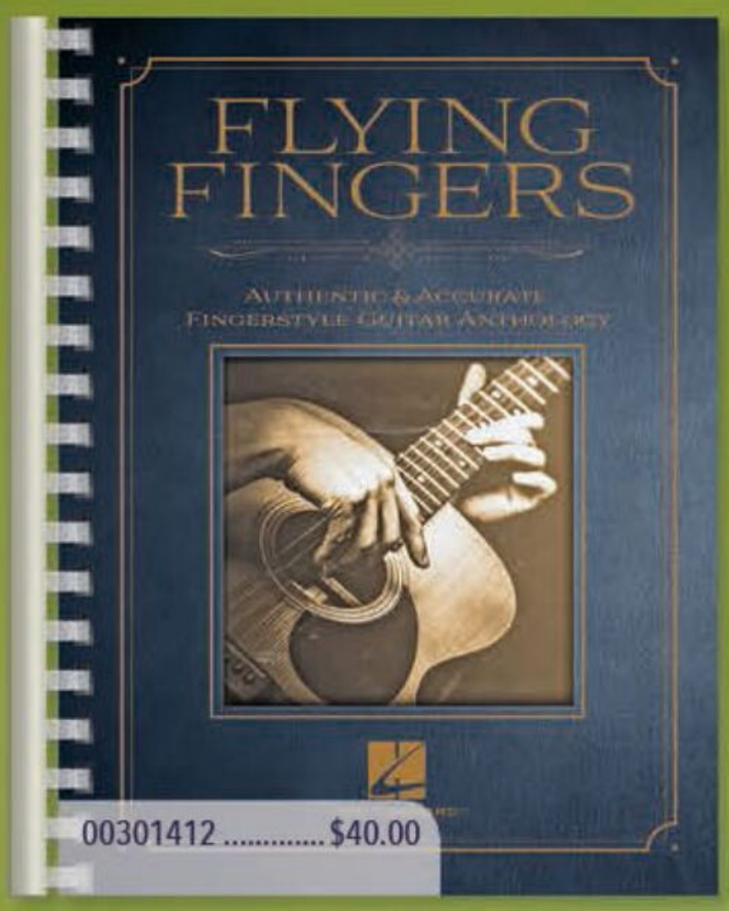

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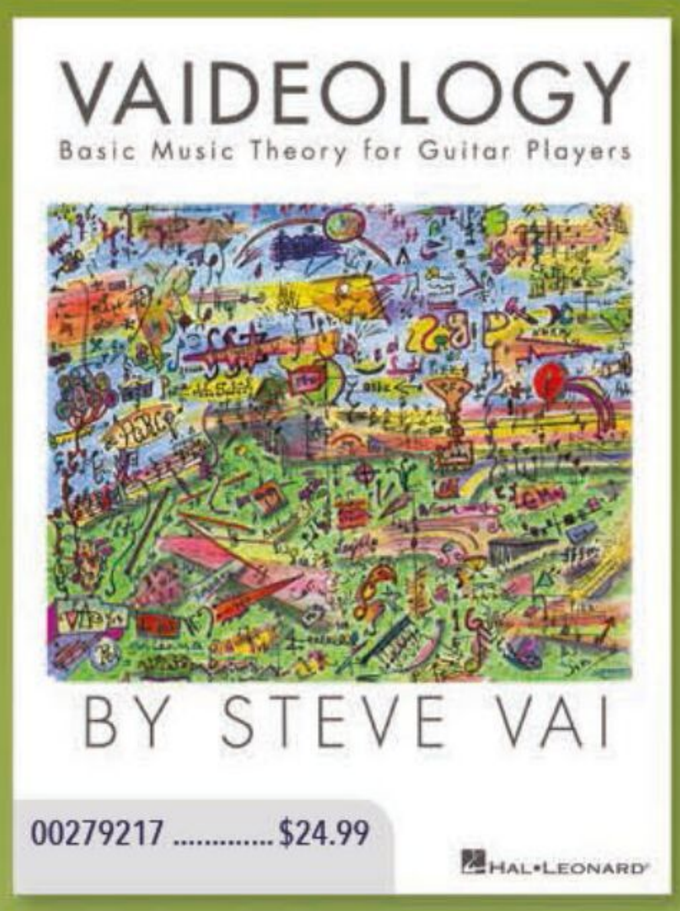

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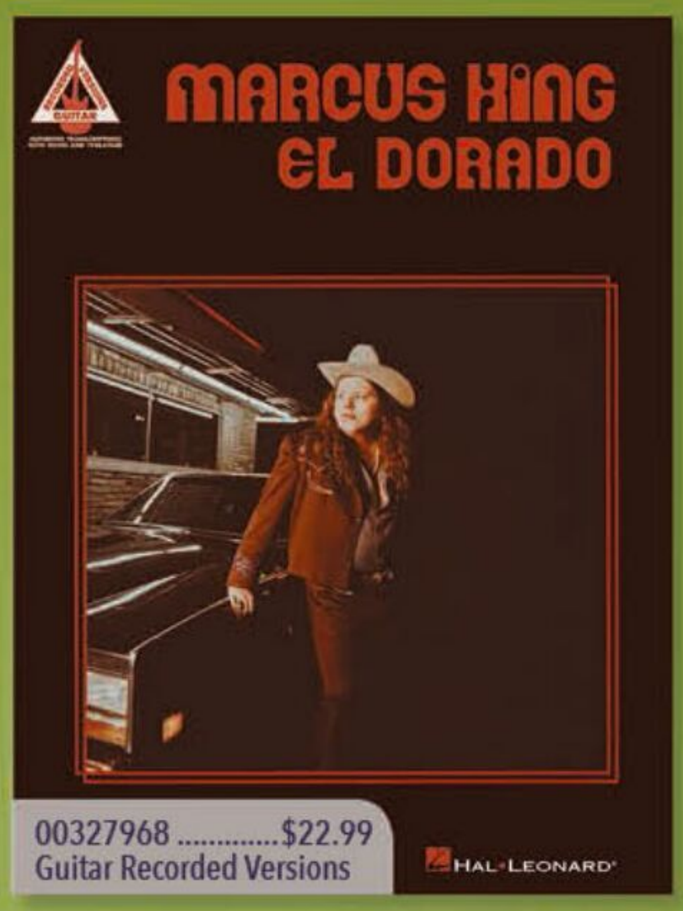

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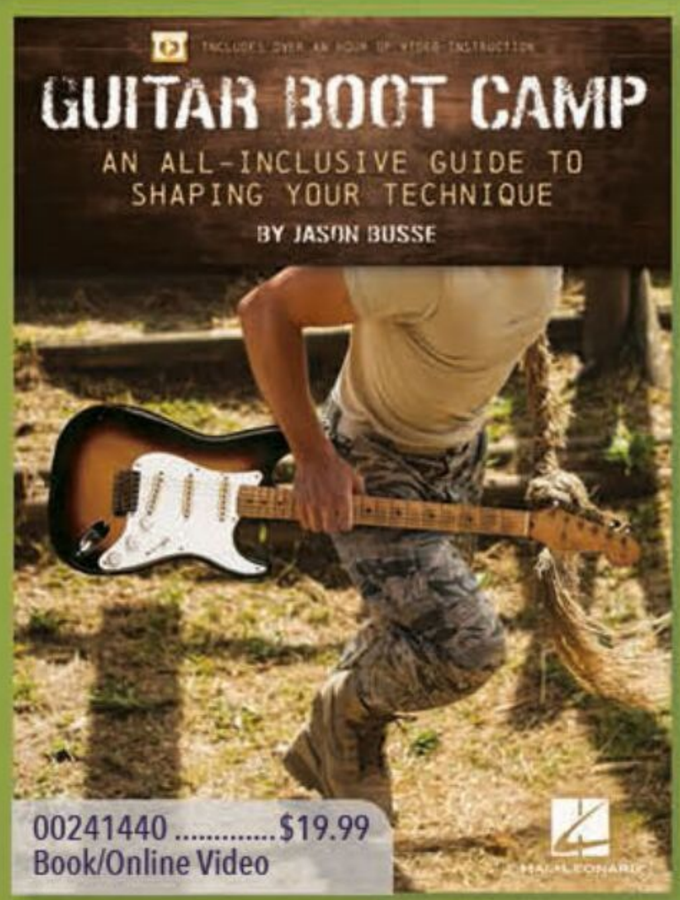

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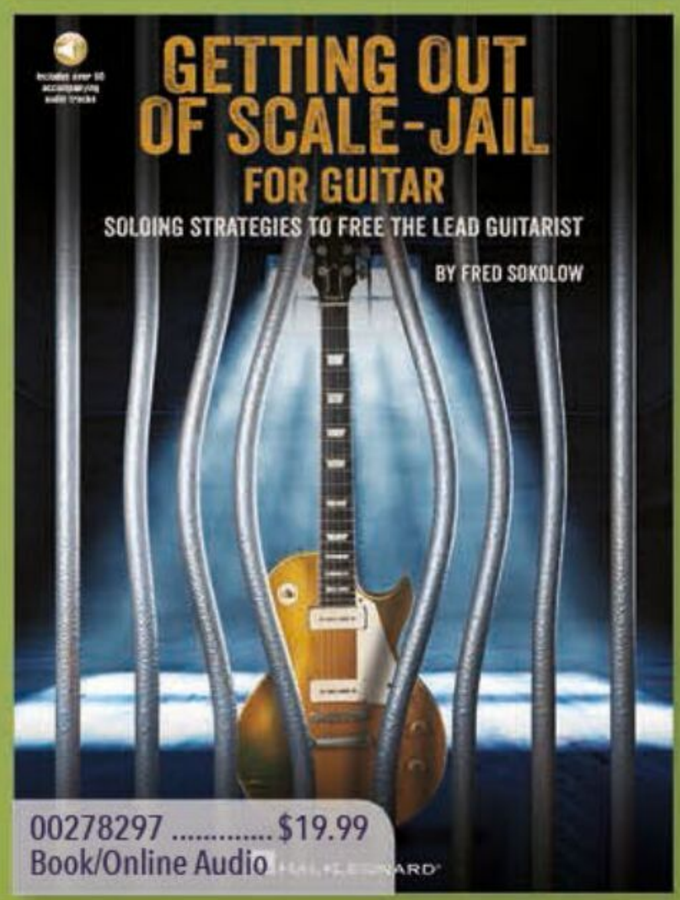

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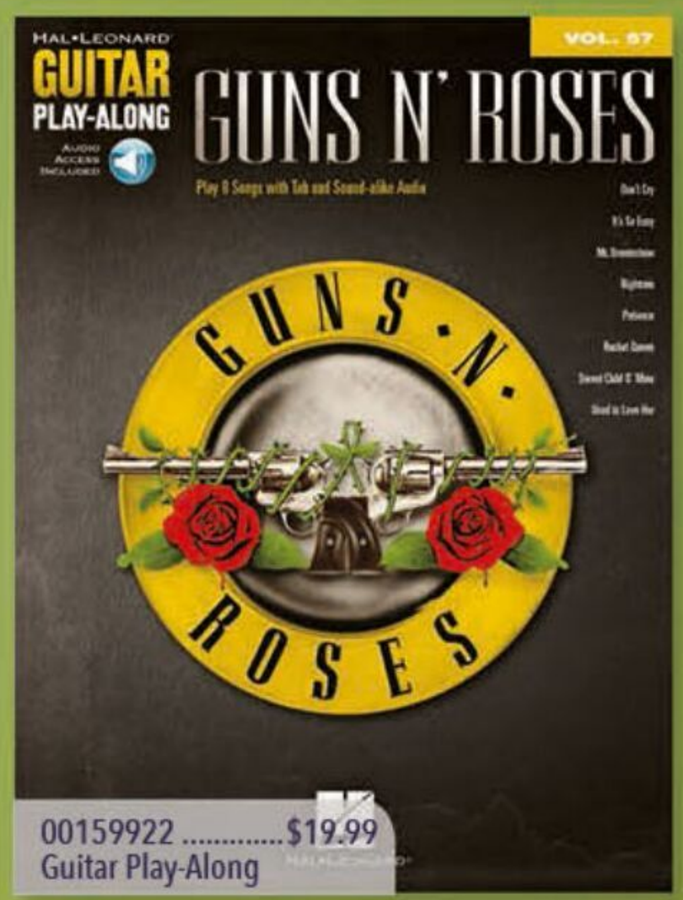

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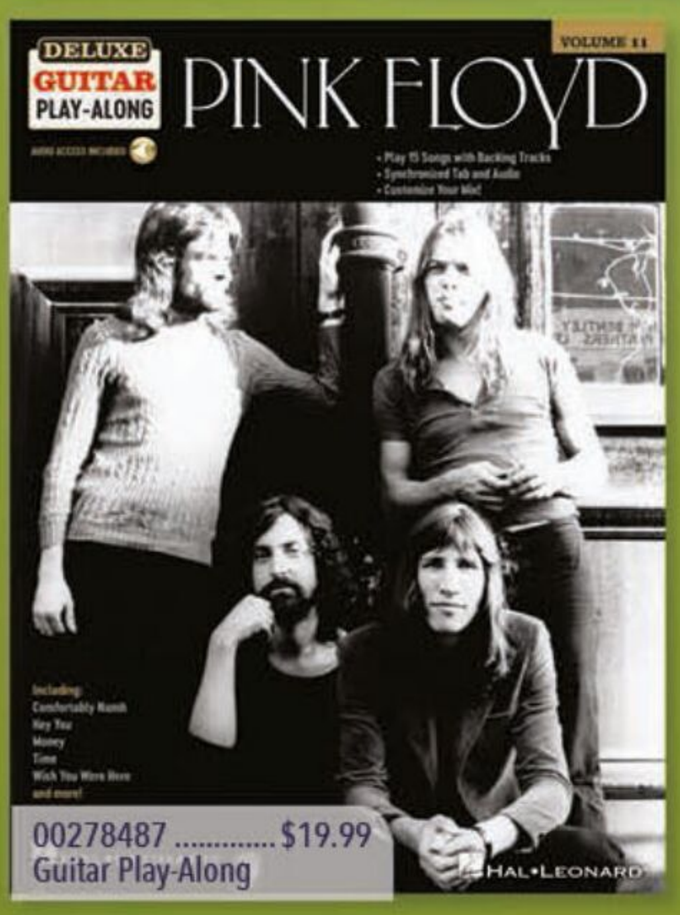

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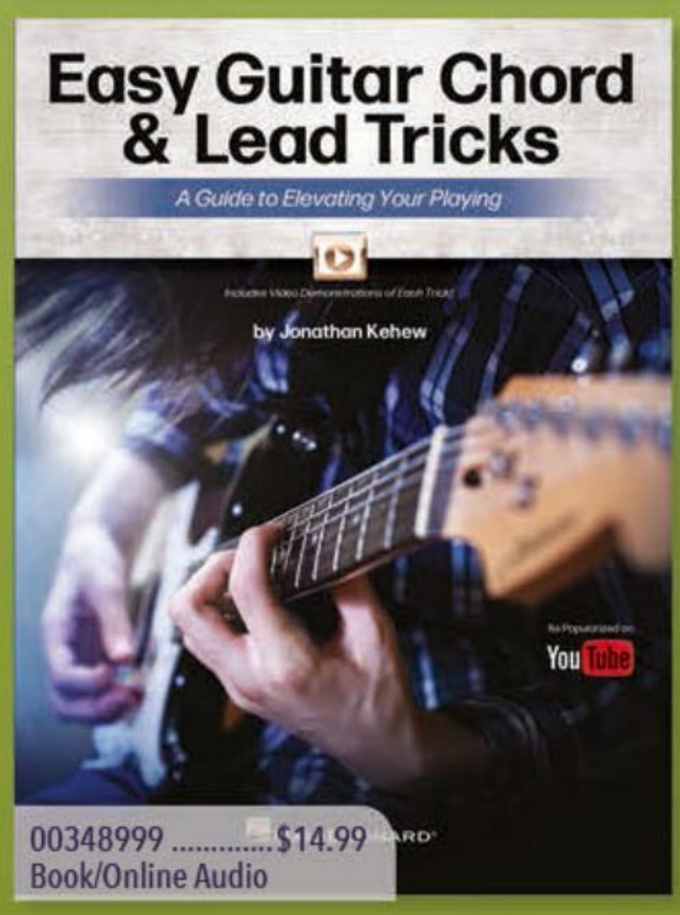

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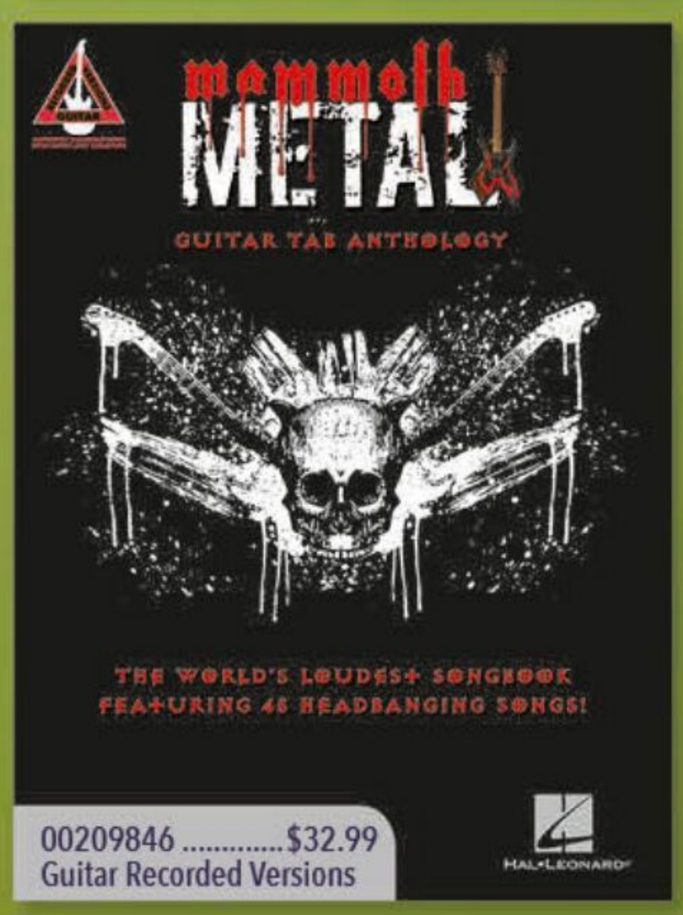

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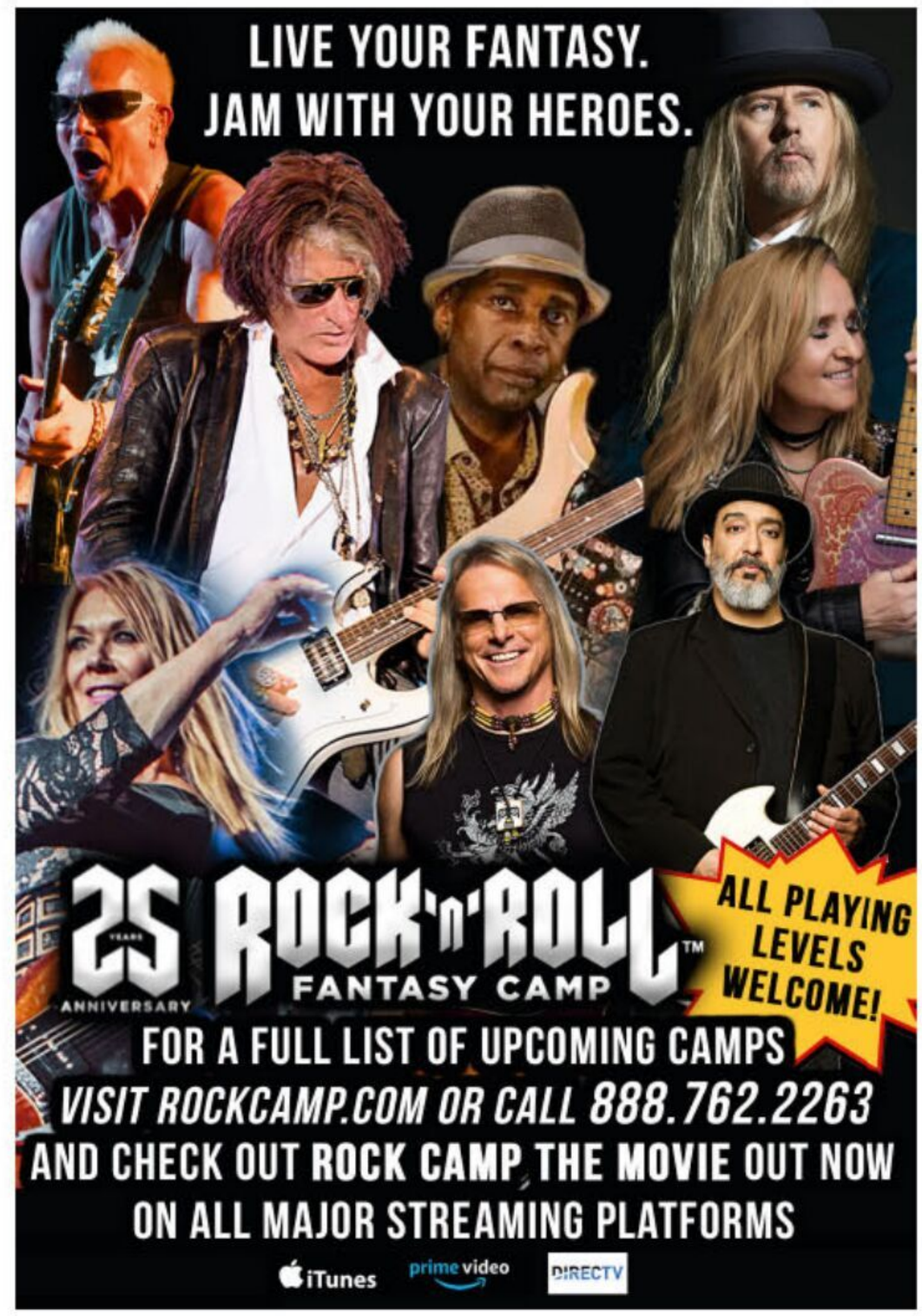

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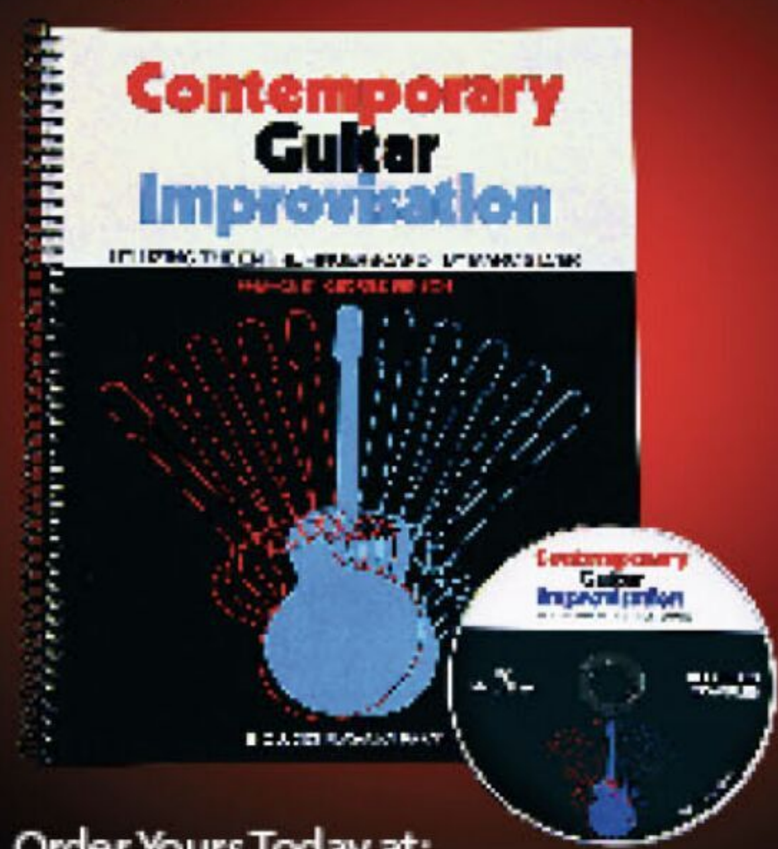

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"SUNSHINE OF YOUR LOVE"

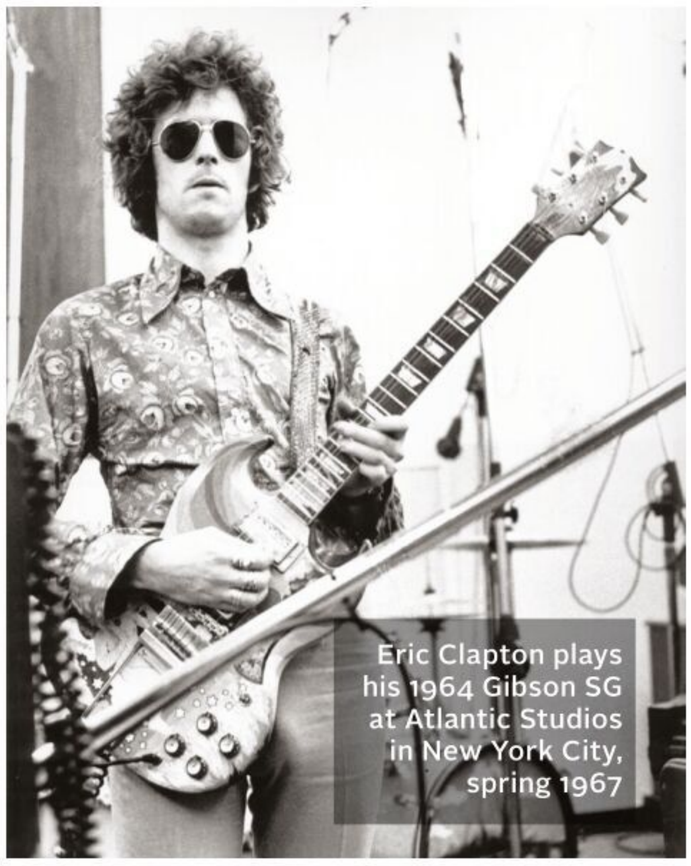
CREAM | *DISRAELI GEARS*, 1967 | GUITARIST: ERIC CLAPTON | STORY BY CHRIS GILL

LAST TIME AROUND, I mentioned how the commonly overused tone descriptions "warm" and "mellow" really didn't apply to B.B. King's sound [*March 2022*]. However, one particular instance where these terms are perfect is Eric Clapton's recordings on Cream's 1967 sophomore album, *Disraeli Gears*, which is where Mr. Slowhand introduced the world to his famous "woman tone." Produced by rolling back the guitar's tone control(s), this sound is characterized by a less percussive attack, focused, vocal-like midrange and smooth, singing sustain.

Cream recorded *Disraeli Gears* over the course of four days in mid May 1967 at Atlantic Studios in New York City following a brief stint of shows in the United States. Clapton's main rig in the studio was a pared-down version of what he was using on stage — a 1964 Gibson SG Standard that he purchased a few months before and refinished with the famous "The Fool" psychedelic graphics, his 1966 Marshall JTM45/100 head and a single Marshall 1960B straight front "tall bottom" 4x12 speaker cabinet (instead of the pair of 4x12s he used on stage). Clapton also had a late-Fifties Gibson Les Paul Custom "black beauty" that he recently purchased and a blackface mid-Sixties Fender Twin Reverb that probably belonged to the studio or was rented for the sessions.

For "Sunshine of Your Love," Clapton apparently used only his stage rig — the '64 SG and Marshall half stack. His solo, played through the neck pickup with the volume at 10 and the tone control rolled down to 1, is the most frequently cited example of Clapton's "woman tone." However, his use of the same volume and tone settings for the bridge pickup heard on the main backing track for the verses and choruses is also an excellent example of "woman tone," albeit with a slightly more percussive attack and brighter character while still sounding fat and, yes, warm.

The key to replicating these distinctive tones involves two key details. First, the amp's passive tone controls need to be set all the way up to "10" to allow the full frequency range to sing, and the volume needs to be at or around "10" as well to provide natural compression and sustain. Second, the guitar's tone capacitor should not have excessive capacitance, rolling off only a moderate amount of the highs to bring forth a fat, honking midrange tone that retains good definition and doesn't sound too muddy.



Eric Clapton plays his 1964 Gibson SG at Atlantic Studios in New York City, spring 1967

Clapton's SG had "vintage-output" (between 7 to 8k ohm resistance) patent number Gibson humbuckers, 500k audio taper potentiometers and Sprague ceramic disk .02uf 50-volt tone capacitors, which is an ideal formula for replicating the finer nuances. Also note that Clapton plugged into the Marshall's "normal" channel instead of the brighter "high treble" channel, which further enhances the midrange and warmth.

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- **Marshall ORI50C Origin 1x12**

TONE TIP: *The Marshall Origin combo doesn't have a "normal" input, but you can dial in a darker, warmer tone by adjusting the "Tilt" control to 0 [zero] to simulate a Marshall Normal channel. If the Epiphone sounds too muddy with the tone knobs at 0 or 1, try installing tone capacitors with lower capacitance (.015uf or lower).*

ORIGINAL GEAR

GUITAR: 1964 Gibson SG Standard (bridge pickup for verses and choruses, neck pickup for solo), Bridge volume: 10, Bridge Tone: 1, Neck Volume: 10, Neck Tone: 1

AMP: 1966 Marshall Super 100 (JTM 45/100) with KT66 tubes (Input 2 upper right corner, Presence: 10, Bass: 10, Middle: 10, Treble: 10, High Treble Volume: NA, Normal Volume: 10) into Marshall 1960B straight front "tall bottom" 4x12 cabinet with Celestion G12M T1221 "greenback" 20-watt, 75Hz speakers

EFFECTS: None

STRINGS/TUNING: Fender Rock 'N Roll 150 light gauge (.010, .013, .015, .026, .032, .038)/standard

PICK: Unknown, probably Fender 351-shape (teardrop) heavy

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